

# Aristotle on Substance as Primary in Time

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## Abstract

In a notoriously obscure passage in *Metaphysics* 7.1 Aristotle claims that substance is primary in time. The only concrete literal interpretation suggested so far of this controversial claim is in terms of existing before and after in time. I argue that this interpretation faces serious problems. I then present a novel literal interpretation, in terms of being an appropriate subject of temporal predications, that is immune to these problems and strongly supported by philosophical and contextual considerations.

## Keywords

Aristotle – Metaphysics – substance – time – primacy/priority

## 1 Introduction

1.1. There is a passage in *Metaphysics* 7.1, where Aristotle states that substance is primary in time ('PiT').

(T<sub>1</sub>) It is obvious then that through this [i.e. substance] each of those [i.e. the accidentals] is, so that that which *is* primarily [τὸ πρῶτως ὄν] and *is* simply (not is something) is substance. Now the 'primary' is said in several senses; but substance is primary in every sense—(α) in account, (β) in knowledge, and (γ) in time. [πολλαχῶς μὲν οὖν λέγεται τὸ πρῶτον ὁμῶς δὲ πάντως ἡ οὐσία πρῶτον, καὶ λόγῳ καὶ γνώσει καὶ χρόνῳ.] (γ') For of the other categories none is separate [χωριστόν], but this [i.e. substance] alone. (α') And in account also this is primary; for in the account of each thing the account of the substance must be within. (β') And we think we know each thing most fully when we know what it is, e.g. what human

being is or what fire is, rather than when we know its quality, its quantity, or where it is, since we know each of these things also only when we know what the quantity or the quality is. (*Metaphysics* 7.1 1028a29–b2, my partition by Greek letters)<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle states here that substance *is* primarily, i.e. it is primary in being. And he then adds that substance is also primary in account, in knowledge, and in time. The traditional reading of (T<sub>1</sub>), which is also the straightforward reading, links these three last kinds of primacy that I marked here by (α), (β), and (γ) with three explanations, marked correspondingly by (α'), (β'), and (γ').<sup>2</sup> Read this way, Aristotle makes the following claim about substance as being primary in time:

(PiT-Explanation): (A) Substance is primary in time,  
because  
(B) substance alone is separate, while accidentals  
are not separate.

Unfortunately, there is considerable disagreement about how to understand these claims (A) and (B), and thus (PiT-Explanation).<sup>3</sup> I am concerned here with interpreting claim (A), independently of any interpretation of the notion of separation. Since substance is contrasted in (T<sub>1</sub>) with accidentals, this claim that substance is primary in time obviously implies that a substance is prior in time to its accidentals, which are thus posterior in time to it. Some scholars now hold that a substance is prior in time to its accidentals in the sense that the substance actually exists, or could have existed, already at a time *before* its accidentals exist, while the accidentals cannot exist before the substance does.<sup>4</sup> This interpretation takes the priority at issue to be literally about time. Other scholars reject this literal interpretation as implausible. Some suggest a

1 All translations are from Barnes 1995, with modifications of my own.

2 That this is the traditional and/or straightforward reading is noted, or implied, for instance, by Wedin 2000, 60, and Bostock 1994, 57, and also by Frede and Patzig 1988, 11 *ad* 1028a31–b2, who suggest though that (γ') in fact serves as explanation for the primacy of substance in all respects.

3 For the controversy about the notion of separation see e.g. Katz 2017, Corkum 2013, Peramatzis 2011, Dufour 1999, Morrison 1985, and Fine 1984.

4 Advocates include Wedin 2000, 59–64. Ross 1924 11 *ad* 1028a32 and Frede and Patzig 1988, 11 *ad* 1028a31–b2 and *ad* 1028a33–4 clearly tend in that direction as well, since they identify the notion of priority in time here with the one noted in *Metaphysics* 5.11 1018b14–19. However, the ways in which they then elaborate how this kind of priority in time applies to the relation between substances and their accidentals sound somewhat metaphorical.

metaphorical interpretation, where being primary in time is understood for instance as a metaphor for being ontologically primary, while others make only rather vague suggestions, or do not suggest any interpretation at all.<sup>5</sup>

1.2. In this paper I suggest that Aristotle operates with *two* concepts of priority in time that are both literally about time, rather than one, as is commonly assumed. The first, 'horizontal' concept, as I call it, underlies the literal interpretation noted above. Here, some A is prior in time to some B in the sense that A exists *before* B does. For instance, Socrates was prior in time to Plato, since Socrates was already alive before Plato came into existence. On this conception it is presupposed that both A and B exist *as such* in time. This is not somehow accidental to them. They have the same temporal status of being *as such* subjects of 'temporal predications'.<sup>6</sup> By this I mean predications such

5 See for instance Bostock 1994, 57, Dahl 2019, 70, and, for a more extended discussion, Peramatzis 2011, 249–253. See also Angioni 2008, 386 n.1 and Tugendhat 2003, 46 for some interesting, but rather vague suggestions that may be understood as gesturing very broadly towards an interpretation along the lines I defend here. Angioni highlights the close relation between Aristotle's conception of time and change, and then suggests that the primacy of substances in time has to do with their role as persisting substrates in any change involving accidental entities, while Tugendhat suggests that it has to do with the fact that substances are what primarily persists and what constitutes the ground for the duration of the being of everything else. A more elaborate interpretation along these lines has been suggested by Vigo 1999. It is only after my paper has been published online by *Phronesis* that I have become aware of this interpretation and that it has certain aspects in common with my own view. My thanks to the readers of the online version of my paper who have made me aware of this, and my apologies for not having noted Vigo's position before. According to both Vigo's and my interpretation, Aristotle's claim that substance is primary in time can be said to be about substances having an independent temporal status of some sort, while accidentals depend in their temporal status on substances. There are, however, also important differences between our views, in particular the following. On my interpretation it is a crucial point of Aristotle's claim that accidentals predicated of a substance at some time do not *as such* exist at that time. Vigo does not seem to be concerned about this point; at any rate he does not explicitly note it. Some passages in his paper may even be taken to suggest that he accepts the view that accidentals predicated of a substance at some time exist *as such* at that time. Further, for Vigo, the temporal primacy of substances is explained by the fact that a substance persists as self-identical substrate throughout the changes of its various accidental determinations, and thereby (co-)constitutes the unified succession of these determinations. The accidental determinations, in turn, are conceivable in temporal terms, i.e. as located in time, only as parts of that succession of determinations of the substance and correspond so conceived to the different phases of the temporal existence of the substance. By contrast, on my account the primacy of substance in time is explained in terms of different kinds of predications, which I think fits better the abstract nature of the discussion in *Metaphysics* 7.1.

6 Note that I speak of predication here as applying also to real, non-linguistic entities.

as that something exists or took place at a time, or that someone was alive for some time, etc.<sup>7</sup> The second, the ‘vertical’ concept of priority in time, as I call it, has so far, it seems, not been acknowledged in the literature. On this concept, some A is prior in time to some B in the following sense: A is *as such* a subject of temporal predications while B is not. B only shares in temporality in a derivative sense, namely *through and in conjunction with A*. For example, Socrates, a substance, exists as such at some time t. By contrast, the colour red, an accidental, does not exist *as such* at any time. Redness shares in temporality only in the sense that there are substances that exist and are red at some time.<sup>8</sup> To avoid unwanted confusion in terminology, I shall also say that A is prior in its ‘temporal status’ to B, namely as being a subject of temporal predications, and as being located in time. This is what I mean by saying that A is prior in time to B in the vertical sense.

In the following I first discuss briefly the ‘horizontalist’ interpretation of (T<sub>1</sub>). I argue that it faces serious problems. Some of them, but not all, can be overcome given additional, but problematic assumptions. I then expound the ‘verticalist’ interpretation, which is immune to these problems. And I argue that it is strongly supported by philosophical and contextual considerations.<sup>9</sup>

7 When I speak of some S as being ‘as such’ a subject of some kind of predication, I mean the second, non-essential sense of belonging ‘as such’ distinguished in the *Posterior Analytics* 1.4 73a34–b5. For instance, body surfaces are as such of one colour or the other, and numbers are as such odd or even.

8 Aristotle says that substance is primary in time in *Metaphysics* 7.1, and not that the being or the existence of substance is primary in time. It seems clear though that only substances insofar as they actually exist are prior in time to their accidentals. See here also *Physics* 4.12 221b25–222a9, where Aristotle holds that certain things, in particular finite instances of change and of rest, but also perishable substances, such as Homer, are ‘in time’ in the sense that their being, i.e. their existence, is measured by time. Hence it seems clear that for Aristotle a substance is not temporally located somehow apart from its existence, but rather insofar as it exists.

9 Note that for Aristotle clearly also events, such as the fall of Troy, (and plausibly also corresponding states of affairs and facts) are as such subjects of temporal predications and are as such located in time (cf. *Metaphysics* 5.11 1018b14–19). And one might even think that what is primarily located in time are events and not substances. However, Aristotle does not address questions of how the temporality of events relates to the temporality of substances, or of accidentals, at any rate not in *Metaphysics* 7.1. There he is only concerned with substances being prior in time to their accidentals, and not with events. I shall thus likewise merely focus on the temporal relation between substances and their accidentals here. I leave aside questions about the temporal status of events and how it may relate to the temporal status of substances and of accidentals, though I am aware that this may seem strange from the standpoint of contemporary metaphysics.

## 2 The Horizontalist Interpretation

2.1. When Aristotle talks about priority in time he has in mind as a rule, it seems, the horizontal concept of priority in time. Prominent examples are the following:

(T<sub>2</sub>) One thing is called prior [πρότερον] to another in four ways. First, and most strictly, in respect of time [κατὰ χρόνον], as when one thing is called older or more ancient than another; for it is because the time is longer that it is called either older or more ancient. (*Categories* 12 14a26–29)

(T<sub>3</sub>) We call things prior and posterior [πρότερα καὶ ὕστερα] [...]. Other things [are prior] with respect to time [κατὰ χρόνον]; some by being further from the present, i.e. in the case of past events (for the Trojan war is prior to the Persian war, because it is further from the present), others by being nearer the present, i.e. in the case of future events (for the Nemean games are prior to the Pythian games, if we treat the present as beginning and first point, because they are nearer the present). (*Metaphysics* 5.11 1018b9, 14–19).

According to (T<sub>2</sub>), some A is prior in time to some B in case A is older, or more ancient, than B, because A exists for a longer time than B. This concept of priority in time makes good sense when applied to perishable substances. For instance, Socrates was prior in time to Plato, because Socrates had been alive for some time already when Plato came into being. (T<sub>3</sub>) distinguishes two cases of being prior in time, but both express the same idea: some A is prior in time to some B just in case A exists or takes place at an earlier time than B. Aristotle seems to have mainly events in mind here. For example, the Trojan war is prior in time to the Persian war, because it took place at an earlier time than the latter did. While these two passages expound the notion of priority in time somewhat differently, the basic concept is the same, namely the horizontal one, i.e. some A is prior in time to some B in the sense that A exists before B does. This includes cases where A already existed before and still exists when B does, etc. The horizontal concept also appears in many other passages, for instance *Physics* 8.7 260b29–261a12 and *Metaphysics* 9.8 1049b17–1050a3.<sup>10</sup>

10 In *Physics* 8.7 260b29–261a12 Aristotle says that locomotion is primary in time [χρόνῳ πρώτην] among the kinds of change. In *Metaphysics* 9.8 1049b17–1050a3 he argues that what is actual is prior in time in a sense to what is potential.

2.2. Given Aristotle's extensive use of the horizontal concept when he talks about priority in time, it makes *prima facie* sense to assume that he may have had this concept in mind also when he claims in *Metaphysics* Z.1 that substance is primary in time, prior to the accidentals. And this is what I mean by the horizontalist interpretation of that claim, which can be formulated as follows:

(H1) A substance S is primary in time in the sense that for any accidental A belonging to S at some time t, S already existed at an earlier time when A did not yet exist.

However, there are some obvious problems with this horizontalist interpretation. One is that any perishable substance already possesses certain accidentals when it comes into existence, its 'initial accidentals', so to speak: for instance a certain temperature and a certain colour. A perishable substance does thus not actually exist before its initial accidentals belong to it, and it would thus not be prior in time to them in the sense of (H1). Furthermore, perishable substances have at least some universally predicated accidentals. For instance, assume that Socrates is walking from Athens to Piraeus on some day. It will be true that he already existed before the accidental of *walking* belongs to him.<sup>11</sup> However, it is obviously not the case that he already existed before that accidental existed, since that accidental is predicable of many things and belonged to other substances, for instance to Ajax, long before Socrates was born. Hence, this accidental of Socrates' would not only fail to be posterior in time to Socrates, it would even be prior in time to him, contrary to (H1).<sup>12</sup>

11 Aristotle uses different expressions to refer to an accidental. For instance, both the adjective 'just' (δίκαιος), and the noun 'justice' (δικαιοσύνη) signify (as constituents of suitable sentences) the same accidental. However, the use of the expression 'just' already indicates that the accidental is predicated of an underlying subject. The use of 'justice' indicates by itself, it seems, only reference to the accidental as such; see e.g. Owen 1965, 97 and *Categories* 8. Similarly, both the expressions 'walks' (βαδίζει) and 'the walking', or literally 'the to walk' (τὸ βαδίζειν) refer to the same accidental, though Aristotle seems to use the infinitival expression to refer to an accidental as such, without thereby already implying that it is predicated of an underlying subject; see here e.g. *Categories* 9, *Metaphysics* 7.1 1028a20–22 and *De Interpretatione* 3. I use italicised expressions, such as '*walking*' (for βαδίζειν) and, in case of particular accidentals, '*Socrates' walking*' or '*Cassandra's musicality*', to clarify that I speak of accidentals, as I recognize that certain expressions, such as 'the walking', may be taken to refer to an event or an accidental.

12 See e.g. Peramatzis 2011, 249 for this kind of counter-example.

Michael Wedin has suggested a more refined horizontalist interpretation, which *prima facie* deals with the counter-examples just mentioned.<sup>13</sup> Wedin 2000, 62 n. 110, suggests basically the following formulation:

(HI\*) A substance S is prior in time to an accidental A predicated of S at time t in the sense that S could exist prior to t without A existing, while A could not exist prior to t without S existing.

(HI\*) is a modally weakened formulation compared to (HI). In addition, it is intended to apply only to cases where the accidental is a *non-recurrent particular*. Wedin assumes here ‘particularism’ about ‘individual accidentals’. An individual here means a least general entity within a genus, for instance a certain colour, or a certain piece of knowledge.<sup>14</sup> There is a controversy in the literature about how to conceive of individual accidentals. The ‘particularist’ holds that individual accidentals are non-recurrent particulars that cannot belong to any other substance than the one to which they in fact belong for a given time. For instance, the particular accidental that is *Socrates’ sunburn* cannot belong to anyone but Socrates, and once it has vanished, it cannot recur. The ‘non-particularist’ holds that individual accidentals are universal in nature and can as such recur, and also occur in more than one substance.<sup>15</sup> Furthermore, Wedin argues that universal accidentals depend ontologically on the respective individual accidentals in the sense that the former do not have an independent existence. And this basically means here that on the level of facts or truth conditions, there are existential facts about particular accidentals, but not about universal accidentals. To say that a universal accidental, say, *colour*, exists, will be true on this view just in case there exist particular accidentals, namely particular colours, of which the universal colour is predicated.<sup>16</sup> However, there are no facts that universal accidentals as such exist.

Wedin’s refined horizontalist interpretation has advantages. We can identify cases where its application makes *prima facie* sense. For instance, assume again that Socrates is walking around on some day. This can now be said to be

13 For some of Wedin’s suggestions see also the Londinenses 1986, 4–5, who are, like Wedin, primarily concerned with the separation of substances, but thereby also with their primacy in time.

14 Cf. *Categories* 2 1b6–9, where Aristotle states that individuals (ἄτομα) are not ‘said of’ a subject.

15 Cf. e.g. Cohen and Reeve 2020, Supplement ‘Nonsubstantial Particulars’, Harte 2010, 103–107, and Wedin 2000, chapter 11, for an overview of the debate. I follow here Wedin’s characterisation of particularism.

16 Cf. Wedin 2000, chapter III 70–71, 86–92, 111–121, in particular 112–116, for that view.

so, because a certain particular accidental, namely *Socrates' walking*, belongs to Socrates on that day. This accidental cannot belong to any other substance but Socrates. Hence, it would seem to be true in this case that Socrates existed already at a time before that accidental of his did. And that accidental could not exist before Socrates did, since it cannot, *ex hypothesi*, belong to any other substance. In addition, Wedin's account avoids counter-examples involving universal accidentals, since there are, *ex hypothesi*, no existential facts about them, and thus also no facts about their existing before or after other things. Universal accidentals are simply excluded from the scope of the claim that a substance is prior in time to its accidentals. Moreover, the modally weakened formulation in (HI\*) allows us to avoid certain counter-examples about initial accidentals. For instance, assume that Socrates had a particular skin colour when he came into existence. Since Socrates can change with respect to his colour, one could hold that he *could* have come into existence at an earlier time without that particular colour. The reverse cannot be the case, since that particular colour cannot belong to anyone but Socrates.

However, there are serious problems also with this refined horizontalist interpretation. To begin with, Aristotle arguably held that there are necessary accidentals.<sup>17</sup> Assuming particularism about individual accidentals, any particular substance will plausibly have some necessary particular accidentals. But if so, a substance could not exist at a time before its necessary particular accidentals do. For example, if Socrates has the necessary particular accidentals of being begotten by his actual parents and of being potentially literate, then he could not have existed at any time without these particular accidentals. And if the sun has a necessary particular accidental of being capable of heating other things, then it could never have existed at some earlier time without that particular accidental.<sup>18</sup> Furthermore, it is not clear what warrants all the assumptions underlying the refined horizontalist interpretation in the first place. First, it is not clear what justifies the modally weakened formulation in (HI\*). The Greek text stating Aristotle's claim in *Metaphysics* Z.1 that

17 Cf. e.g. *Posterior Analytics* 1.4 73b16–24, *Topics* 1.5 102a18–30, and *Metaphysics* 5.30 1025a30–34.

18 The horizontalist might want to deny that there are necessary particular accidentals, claiming that there are only necessary universal ones, which fall outside the scope of (HI\*). I do not think that such a defence is ultimately convincing, and I do not pursue this issue further here. The *Londinenses* (1986, 4–5) have suggested that the claim that substance is primary in time may be explained by assuming a context of change. Within such a context, the existence of an accidental would be considered as the result of an accidental change involving a pre-existing substance. However, there is no obvious reason justifying this assumption.



substance is primary in time, in account, and in knowledge omits the verb; see (T<sub>1</sub>) above. The straightforward way to understand that claim is as saying that substance is actually primary in time. Assuming the horizontal concept of priority in time to underlie this claim, it should follow that a substance *actually* exists before its accidentals do, and not in some cases only *counterfactually* so.<sup>19</sup> In addition, if the claim about substance being primary in time is taken in a modally weakened sense, then consistency demands that the claims about substance being primary in account and in knowledge should be taken in a modally weakened sense as well. And this should then plausibly be so also with respect to the preceding claim that substance is primary in being, since that kind of primacy seems closely related to the other three kinds of primacy. However, this is highly implausible, since it would imply that a (kind of) substance is sometimes only *counterfactually* prior in account, in knowledge, and in being to an accidental, and not actually so. Furthermore, it is not clear why the proposed interpretation of the derivative ontological status of universal accidentals, and their exclusion from the scope of (H1\*), should be accepted, at least not without further independent motivation. After all, particular substances have, among their predicates, universal accidentals, not only individual accidentals.<sup>20</sup> Particular substances should thus be prior in time to their universal accidentals as well, and not only to their individual accidentals. Finally, the refined horizontalist interpretation depends crucially on the assumption that there are particular accidentals in Aristotle's ontology. However, this is a controversial view.<sup>21</sup> It will thus appeal only to those who accept this assumption anyway.

### 3 The Verticalist Interpretation

3.1. The verticalist interpretation is based on the idea that not all existing entities have the same temporal status. Only some of them are as such subjects of

19 The modally weakened formulation in (H1\*) may have some initial plausibility for those who hold that substances are χωριστόν in the sense of being capable of existing independently of other things. If so, one could think that substances *could* exist prior in time to their accidentals, because they are separable from them, i.e. because they *could* exist independently from them. Wedin 2000, 59–64 in fact argues that separation interpreted in terms of existential independence supports the horizontalist interpretation. However, this interpretation of separation, while influential, is controversial, and the concerns noted in the main text still apply.

20 *Categories* 5 2b1–3 and 2b15–17, for instance, make clear that also non-individual accidentals are predicated of particular substances, and not only individual accidentals, *pace* Ackrill 2002, 74f, 83.

21 See Wedin 2000, chapter II, for his defence of particularism.

temporal predications and suitable relata of genuine temporal relations, such as existing before or after something else. This idea may become clearer by having a look first at cases of spatial predications for comparison.

Arguably, not all entities are as such subjects of spatial predications. Corporeal entities, such as animals and stones, are obviously as such subjects of spatial predications. They have a 'spatially extended existence' and a 'spatially located existence', so to speak. They are as such at a place, and move as such from one place to another etc. Non-corporeal entities, such as thoughts and qualities, are plausibly not as such subjects of spatial predications. At any rate, this seems to be Aristotle's view, when he says that bodies are as such in place, while souls and accidentals are in place only accidentally, because they belong to a body that is as such in place.<sup>22</sup> For example, Socrates, a corporeal substance, is as such at some place at some time, for instance in a house in Athens. By contrast, the accidentals belonging to him at that time, for instance *thinking* and *sitting*, are not as such in that house. They are in that house only accidentally, namely insofar as they belong to Socrates who is in that house. We may still truthfully say though that Socrates is thinking and sitting in that house. But that does not mean that these accidentals are as such in the house. Since accidentals are not as such subjects of spatial predications, they are also not suitable relata of genuine spatial relations, such as being closer to something than something else. For instance, Socrates may be closer to the door at some time than, say, Callias is. However, the accidentals *thinking* and *sitting* belonging to Socrates at that time are not as such closer to the door than Callias is. They are simply not the kinds of thing that have as such, in virtue of themselves, a spatial location.

The verticalist interpretation adopts a similar view of temporal predications. On this interpretation, not all kinds of thing have a 'temporally extended' and 'temporally located' existence, and are *as such* subjects of temporal predications. Substances (at least particular sensible substances) are as such subjects of temporal predications, while accidentals are not. Accidentals share in temporality only in the sense that they belong at some time to at least one substance that exists at that time. It is because accidentals depend on substances in this way for taking part in temporality at all that they are posterior to them with respect to their temporal status, or their 'right' to be temporally located. Substances are primary in time on this view, because they are as such in time, while accidentals share in temporality only in virtue of and together with their substances. On the verticalist interpretation, Aristotle's claim that substance is primary in time is thus not about a genuine temporal relation, that substances

22 See e.g. *Physics* 4.5 212b7–12, and *De Anima* 1.3 405b31–406a2, 406a14–22.

exist before their accidentals do. It is an ontological claim about what kinds of entity count as appropriate subjects for temporal predications in the first place.

In the following I briefly discuss some points about substances as subjects of temporal predications. I then argue that accidentals are not as such in time, and after that, that the vertical concept of primacy in time, but not the horizontal concept, matches structurally with the other kinds of primacy listed in (T<sub>1</sub>) in *Metaphysics* 7.1. Finally, I offer a reason why Aristotle should exceptionally employ the vertical concept of primacy in time in that passage.

3.2. It seems quite natural and unproblematic to assume that particular sensible substances are as such in time. After all we often talk about the age of some person, or about when someone lived or was born etc. And it is suggested by the passage (T<sub>2</sub>), paragraph (2.1) above, where Aristotle notes that one thing is prior in time to another if it is older or more ancient, obviously having (also) particular sensible substances in mind. What it is for some entity to be, or to exist, though, depends on what kind of thing it is.<sup>23</sup> Take the following sentences:

a<sub>1</sub>) Socrates existed in 400 BCE.

a<sub>2</sub>) Socrates was alive in 400 BCE.

(a<sub>1</sub>) and (a<sub>2</sub>) express the same fact, though (a<sub>1</sub>) does so in a more abstract way than (a<sub>2</sub>). In these two cases Socrates is *as such* the subject of temporal predication. This is not accidental to him.

It is less clear whether non-sensible substances, such as souls or the prime mover, and universal substances, such as the genus animal, are as such in time on Aristotle's view. But these questions need not be decided here, first, because the verticalist is in no worse position here than the horizontalist; and also because the verticalist interpretation seems in principle compatible with different possible assumptions about these kinds of entities. The verticalist could in principle assume or deny, say, that Socrates' soul existed as such at some time, and that the prime mover exists as such at all times. Furthermore, it is *prima facie* not clear whether Aristotle has particular substances, or universal substances, or both, in mind, when he claims that substance is primary in the different senses in *Metaphysics* 7.1.<sup>24</sup> In any case, it seems unlikely that universal substances considered apart from the particular substances to which

23 See here for instance *Metaphysics* 8.2, and *De Anima* 2.2 413a20–28, 413b1–13, 2.4 415b7–14.

24 See for instance Bostock 1994, 54, on this interpretative problem.

they belong are in time and subjects of temporal predications.<sup>25</sup> For example, the species human being will arguably only exist at a time insofar as particular human beings exist at that time and in virtue of their existence. However, the verticalist interpretation seems compatible with the different possible assumptions here, i.e. that the species human being has as such a temporal existence, or that it is located in time only derivatively in virtue of the particulars to which it belongs, or also that it is involved somehow in the temporal status of the particular human beings, even though it is not as such in time.

**3.3.** The crucial difference between the horizontalist and the verticalist interpretation turns on the question of whether (at least some) accidentals exist as such in time and are as such subjects of temporal predications. The horizontalist assumes this, while the verticalist denies it. I argue in this and the following paragraphs (3.4) and (3.5) that there are good reasons to assume the verticalist view on this point, and thus to reject the horizontalist view. I assume here, for the sake of argument, that there are particular accidentals in Aristotle's ontology.

To begin with, there seems to be no obvious reason or need for Aristotle to assume that accidentals are as such in time. Consider a case of accidental change, for example that an unmusical human being becomes a musical human being. This is a kind of case where the horizontalist interpretation should *prima facie* apply, since here a substance exists before it acquires an accidental. However, in order for it to apply, it must be assumed that the accidental exists as such at the time when the change is complete. But this does not follow from Aristotle's conception of accidental change.<sup>26</sup> On this conception, a substance that first lacks a certain accidental attribute undergoes and persists through a change and then has that attribute. So strictly speaking, an accidental change results in the existence of a compound of a substance and an accidental at a time, or alternatively, in the holding of a state of affairs at a time, namely that a substance has an accidental at the time when the change is

25 At *Posterior Analytics* 1.31 87b28–32 Aristotle says that universals exist always. One could thus think that they are as such located in time. However, Aristotle says in this passage also that we do not perceive a universal (as such), because a universal is not a 'this-something' (τὸδε τι), as particular sensible substances are, and it does not exist at a present 'now', though it exists *always*. Now, if universals do not exist as such at any given moment in time, they also cannot exist always in the sense that they exist as such at all given moments in time. It is thus more plausible to assume that universals exist always in a derivative sense, namely insofar as there exists at any time some particular of which they are predicated.

26 Cf. *Physics* 1.7, in particular 190a13–21.

complete. The result of an accidental change is *not* that the acquired accidental exists *as such* at the time when the change is complete. There is thus also no obvious reason to assume that the accidental exists as such at any time after the change is complete while the substance still has that accidental. However, this is what the horizontalist interpretation assumes, namely:

(AS) If a substance S has a (particular) accidental attribute A at time t, it follows that A *as such* exists at time t.

For example, assume that there is an accidental change, the event that is Cassandra's becoming musical. Cassandra is unmusical at  $t_x$  and becomes musical at  $t_{x+1}$ . And let us assume for the sake of argument that she becomes musical by acquiring the particular accidental *Cassandra's musicality*. On Aristotle's conception of change, the result of this change now is *not* that *Cassandra's musicality as such* exists at  $t_{x+1}$ . It is only that Cassandra is musical from  $t_{x+1}$ , or alternatively, that Cassandra has *Cassandra's musicality* from  $t_{x+1}$ . This being so, it will *in a sense* be true to say that *Cassandra's musicality* exists at  $t_{x+1}$ . However, this is not yet to say that *Cassandra's musicality as such* exists at  $t_{x+1}$ . So we have the following three claims:

- i) Cassandra is musical at  $t_{x+1}$ .
- ii) *Cassandra's musicality* exists at  $t_{x+1}$ .
- iii) *Cassandra's musicality as such* exists at  $t_{x+1}$ .

(i) expresses the result of the change that is Cassandra's becoming musical. (ii) is true, given that (i) is true, and assuming that Cassandra became musical by acquiring *Cassandra's musicality*. The question, however, is what fact makes (ii) true. The horizontalist takes (ii) to amount to (iii) and thereby assumes that there is an existential fact that *Cassandra's musicality as such* exists at  $t_{x+1}$  that makes (iii) and (ii) true. However, this would only be so on the additional assumption (AS) just noted. By contrast, what makes (ii) true for the verticalist are the same facts that make also (i) true, namely that Cassandra exists at  $t_{x+1}$  and that she is musical at  $t_{x+1}$ , or alternatively, that Cassandra has *Cassandra's musicality* at  $t_{x+1}$ . On the verticalist view, there simply is no fact that *Cassandra's musicality as such* exists at a time. Moreover, it does not follow from Aristotle's conception of change. The burden to explain why it should be assumed that accidentals exist as such in time thus falls on the horizontalist.

3.4. Furthermore, the verticalist view is suggested by Aristotle's conception of being as a  $\pi\rho\delta\varsigma$  ἓν unity, and also by the way in which we usually determine the truth of claims that accidentals exist at some time. Aristotle notes, in the lines before he talks about substance as being primary in time in (T1), paragraph (1.1)

above, that what is primarily called 'being' is substance, while other things are called so only in a derivative sense.<sup>27</sup> This is the basic idea of Aristotle's conception of being as a  $\pi\rho\acute{o}\varsigma\ \acute{\epsilon}\nu$  unity, which he expounds more explicitly in *Metaphysics* 4.2 1003a33–b19. On this conception, whatever is called 'being' is called so, either because it is a being in the primary, simple sense, or because it is related to a primary being. Substance is the principle of being and called a 'being' in the primary sense. Accidental entities are beings in a derivative sense. They are beings only through their relations to substances, and only insofar as they inhere in substances as their qualities, or quantities etc. Aristotle holds correspondingly that accidentals are not beings in their own right, or as such ( $\chi\alpha\theta'\ \alpha\upsilon\tau\acute{\alpha}$ ), while substances are.<sup>28</sup> He expounds that a substance, such as an animal, is just what it is, and thus a being in its own right. By contrast, an accidental such as *walking* is not just what it is. This is so because what it is for *walking* to be amounts to there being some suitable subject with a distinct nature, i.e. some legged animal, that walks. Accidentals do thus not exist as such or in virtue of themselves. An accidental can be said to exist only in the sense that there exists (at least) some substance in which the accidental inheres.

Given that accidentals are beings, and exist, only in a derivative sense, they plausibly also exist in time only in a derivative sense, and not as such or in virtue of themselves. That is, an accidental can be said to exist, but only in the sense that it inheres in some existing substance. This being so, an accidental can plausibly be said to exist at a time also only in the sense that there exists a substance at that time in which the accidental inheres at that time. And an accidental can then plausibly be said to endure for a certain time only in the sense that it inheres throughout that period of time in a substance that exists throughout this time, etc. For example, *Cassandra's musicality* can be said to exist at a time *t*, but only in the sense that it inheres in Cassandra at *t*, who exists as such at *t*. But this is just another way of saying, more properly, that Cassandra exists at *t* and has *Cassandra's musicality* at *t*. *Cassandra's musicality as such* does not exist in time and it is thus not as such a subject of temporal predications.

The verticalist view is also, and more generally, supported by considerations about what plausibly makes true or false claims about accidentals existing at some time. For instance, take the claim that mathematical knowledge existed for thousands of years. What makes this claim true or false are obviously facts about human beings, about whether they existed for thousands of years and possessed mathematical knowledge throughout that time. And when we claim

27 Cf. *Metaphysics* 7.1 1028a10–31.

28 Cf. *Posterior Analytics* 1.4 73b5–10, and *Metaphysics* 7.1 1028a20–29, just before (T1).

that *Cassandra's musicality* existed 3000 years ago, then what makes this claim true or false obviously is whether or not it was the case that Cassandra was alive 3000 years ago and possessed *Cassandra's musicality* at that time. These are the kinds of facts, i.e. facts about substances and the way they are, that we usually have in mind when we make claims about accidentals existing in time. We seem not to have in mind some abstract facts that accidentals *as such* exist at some time, and which are somehow facts *above and beyond* the facts that particular substances possess these accidentals at that time. It is thus also implausible to think that on Aristotle's view an accidental can exist as such at a time, rather than that the accidental can be said to exist at a time only in the sense that there exists at least one substance at that time that has the accidental at that time.

3.5. Support for the verticalist view that substances, but not accidentals, are as such subjects of temporal predications can arguably be found also in Aristotle's theory of time. Since showing this in due detail would require too much space, I only present one possible argument in outline. On Aristotle's view, time is intimately connected to change. It is characterised as the countable amount or the duration of a finite change. Aristotle holds that finite changes and also finite states of rest, and, more generally, what has its (finite) being or existence in change and rest, is 'in time' in the sense that its existence is measured by time. These things have thus a temporally extended existence. This clearly applies to perishable substances such as Homer, whose existence, or life, is measured by time. Perishable substances have their existence in change and rest plausibly in the sense that they are by nature and as such subject to change and are constantly changing, or at rest, in different respects.<sup>29</sup> Further, Aristotle notes that things that do not undergo change or states of rest are not in time, since something (other than finite changes and states of rest) can only be measured by time, it seems, insofar as it undergoes (finite) change or states of rest. Among the entities from the *Categories*, only particular substances, such as Socrates and Homer, undergo change and states of rest.<sup>30</sup> This suggests that, among these entities, only particular substances have their existence measured by time, and thus that only they have a temporally extended existence. By contrast, accidentals as such do not undergo change or states of rest. They thus seem not to belong to the kind of entities that have an existence in change and rest, which could be measured by time. Accidentals as such seem thus

29 Cf. *Physics* 4.11 219a30–b9, 4.12 221a4–9, and 221b25–222a1; see also Coope 2005, 143–158.

30 Cf. *Physics* 4.12 221b18–23 and *Categories* 5 4a10–23.

not to be in time and to have no temporally extended existence. They do not exist as such *for* any period of time, and thus arguably also not *at* some time. From this perspective, to hold that accidentals exist as such for or at some time would be to treat them as if they were particular substances.<sup>31</sup>

3.6. There is also a contextual reason to assume the verticalist interpretation. In passage (T<sub>1</sub>) from *Metaphysics* 7.1, in paragraph (1.1) above, Aristotle claims that substance is primary in four ways. It is primary in being, and also primary in time, in account, and in knowledge. There is the question of how these kinds of primacy are related, and in particular whether the last three kinds of primacy are implicit in or follow from the primacy in being, as seems plausible.<sup>32</sup> However, independently of how exactly they are related, the vertical concept of primacy in time matches structurally with the other kinds of primacy noted there, while the horizontal concept does not. In each of these three other kinds of primacy, substance is prior with respect to some feature F, and the accidentals are secondary or posterior. In each case, substance is F in its own right, while the accidentals are F only in a derivative sense, namely arguably only *in virtue of and in conjunction* with the (kind of) substance in which they inhere. This is also precisely the structure of the vertical concept of primacy in time.

I have already explained in paragraphs (3.4) above that substances are beings in their own right. Accidentals are beings only in a derivative sense, namely insofar as they belong to substances as the primary beings. Substances are primary in being in this sense. Furthermore, Aristotle states in (T<sub>1</sub>) that in the account or definition of each thing the account of the substance must be included. And in *Metaphysics* 7.4 and 7.5 he explains that there is a *πρὸς ἑν* unity also with respect to the different senses of 'definition' and of 'essence'. Substances have a definition in the primary, simple sense of 'definition'. Accidentals have definitions only in a derivative sense, which includes the definition, or the name, of the appropriate kind of subject, i.e. a substance under

31 Eternal sensible substances, such as the sun for Aristotle, are also not 'in time' insofar as they are eternal. The reason is that their existence is infinite and thus not measurable by time, though their finite, measurable motions are in time. See *Physics* 4.12 221b3–5, 221b25–222a1. Eternal sensible substances have thus a temporally extended existence insofar as they undergo change but not a measurable one. By contrast, accidentals are not in time, because they do not undergo change and have thus no temporally extended existence at all.

32 Bostock 1994, 57, and also 66–68, for instance, notes this as a possible interpretation.



some description.<sup>33</sup> An accidental can thus be said to be definable only in the sense that there is a definition of what it is for that accidental to belong to the kind of substance to which it belongs as such; or alternatively and more naturally, in the sense that there is a definition of what it is for that kind of substance to have the accidental. For instance, the accidental *masculine* can only be said to be definable in the sense that there is a definition of what it is for a living being to be masculine. Substances are primary in account in this sense. Finally, Aristotle explains in (T<sub>1</sub>) that we know an accidental only when we know what it is. And *what something is* is explained in the definition of that thing. Given the πρὸς ἑν unity of 'definition', a substance will be knowable as such, since it is as such definable in what it is, while accidentals will only be knowable in a derivative sense, since they are only definable in what they are in a derivative sense. An accidental will thus be knowable only in the sense that there can be knowledge of what it is for the corresponding kind of substance to have that accidental. Substances are primary in knowledge in this sense.

The vertical concept of primacy in time is analogous in its structure to these three kinds of primacy just noted. By contrast, the horizontal concept of primacy in time is not structurally analogous to them. For, on the horizontal concept of primacy in time, accidentals are assumed to exist as such in time, and not only in conjunction with the substances in which they inhere (even though it is presupposed that they inhere in them at the time when they exist). The verticalist interpretation is thus preferable to the horizontalist interpretation.

3.7. I have noted in paragraph (2.1) above that Aristotle as a rule seems to have in mind the horizontal concept when he talks about priority in time. It thus falls on the verticalist to explain why Aristotle should speak in *Metaphysics* 7.1 exceptionally about priority in time in the vertical sense, i.e. about priority in temporal status to be a subject of temporal predications. A possible and, I think, plausible answer to this question is as follows.

When Aristotle talks about temporal relations he usually has *genuine* temporal relations in mind, for instance existing or occurring simultaneously.

33 In *Metaphysics* 7.5 1030b14–27 Aristotle states that accidentals, such as *equal* or *female*, are defined 'by addition' (ἐκ προσθέσεως). In 7.4 1029b29–33 he gives an example of a mistaken way to define the essence of an accidental, which is by addition, namely when one attempts to define the essence of *white* by defining the essence of white human being. This account is mistaken, since what is as such white (or of some other colour) are surfaces of bodies, and not human beings. Nevertheless, the example suggests that the appropriate way to define by addition, say, what it is for *white* to be, is to define what it is for a white surface to be. In this way, there would be no definition of an accidental as such, but only of the appropriate kind of subject or substance *qua* having that accidental.

The relata at issue here are substances and events, but not accidentals. The horizontal concept of priority in time is about one of these genuine temporal relations. It is thus not surprising that Aristotle usually has the horizontal concept in mind when he talks about priority in time, and that he expounds the horizontal concept when he explains what being prior in time amounts to in (T<sub>2</sub>) and (T<sub>3</sub>), in paragraph (2.1) above. By contrast, when Aristotle talks about priority in time in *Metaphysics* 7.1, he talks exceptionally about substances on the one side and accidentals on the other side as relata. And he thus talks exceptionally about priority in the vertical sense, or about priority in temporal status. The vertical concept of priority in time is not about a genuine temporal relation, but about an ontological relation with respect to the temporal status of the relata. As such, it is still literally about time. Aristotle talks exceptionally about the vertical concept of priority in time in *Metaphysics* 7.1 to make a principled point that only needs to be made once. He draws the ontological distinction there between those entities from the *Categories* that are as such subjects of temporal predications, namely substances, and those that are not, namely accidentals. Once this point is clarified, the vertical concept has fulfilled its purpose. Furthermore, Aristotle's argument in *Metaphysics* 7.1 for the general ontological primacy of substances over accidentals seems to be the right context for drawing that principled ontological distinction. For the primacy of substances in temporal status seems to be an aspect of, or to follow from, their ontological primacy. Noting their primacy in temporal status in *Metaphysics* 7.1 thus enables Aristotle to shed light on their ontological primacy.

#### 4 Conclusion

4.1. I have discussed two literal interpretations of Aristotle's claim in *Metaphysics* 7.1 that substance is primary in time, which are based on two distinct concepts of being primary in time, the vertical concept and the horizontal concept. I first discussed the horizontalist interpretation and presented some serious problems for it. I then argued that some of these problems, though not all, can be dealt with on a refined horizontalist interpretation. However, this refined horizontalist interpretation is based in turn on some problematic assumptions, such as particularism about individual accidentals, and a modally weakened understanding of the primacy in time of substances. I then discussed the verticalist interpretation and argued that there are good philosophical and contextual reasons to assume it. Moreover, it is an advantage of the verticalist interpretation that it is naturally immune to the kind of counterexamples that threaten to undermine the horizontalist view. It also does not

depend on any of the problematic assumptions underlying the refined horizontalist interpretation. The verticalist interpretation is actually compatible with both particularism and non-particularism about individual accidentals. Finally, the verticalist interpretation may provide a fresh perspective on the controversy about the notion of separation. It suggests a novel understanding of what a plausible interpretation of this notion should, among other things, be able to explain, namely the difference in temporal status between substances and their accidentals.<sup>34</sup>

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# Immediacy in Aristotle's Epistemology

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## Abstract

This article discusses immediate premises in Aristotle's epistemology. The traditional interpretation identifies immediacy with indemonstrability: immediate truths are the indemonstrable principles of science from which the theorems are derived by demonstration. Against this common reading, I argue that Aristotle's recognition of two kinds of epistemic priority (priority by nature and priority to us) commits him to the existence of two types of immediacy, only one of which is equivalent to indemonstrability. As a result, my interpretation offers a better understanding of a puzzling passage (*APo.* 1.13, 78a22–b4) that seems to contradict the standard view.

## Keywords

Aristotle – immediacy – demonstration – explanation – justification

## 1 Introduction

For Aristotle, scientific knowledge has a foundationalist structure. Some propositions are known by demonstration (*ἀπόδειξις*), a deductive argument in which the premises display the causal explanation (*αἰτίαν*) of the conclusion (*APo.* 1.2, 71b9–25). Demonstrations ultimately proceed from indemonstrable premises that work as the principles or foundations (*ἀρχαί*) of science, of which the scientist has a non-demonstrative type of knowledge called 'comprehension' (*νοῦς*).<sup>1</sup> Aristotle often refers to these principles as 'primary' (*πρῶτα*) and

1 *APo.* 1.2, 71b16–19; 1.3, 72b18–25; 1.33, 88b35–7; 2.19, 100b5–17. In this paper, I shall use 'comprehension' and 'noetic knowledge' exclusively for the knowledge of 'proper principles' and will

‘immediate’ (ἄμεσα), especially when what is in question is the foundational role that distinguishes them from demonstrable truths.<sup>2</sup> Thus, many interpreters since the ancient commentators believe, not without reason, that when Aristotle describes scientific principles as immediate, his intention is to claim that they are indemonstrable.<sup>3</sup>

For the sake of exposition, let us classify as *epistemic* any interpretation that understands the term ‘immediate’ (ἄμεσος) in Aristotle as referring to the foundational status of certain propositions in a given system of justification or explanation, which consists in their being epistemically prior to and more fundamental than the other truths in the system. The most common interpretation that satisfies this description simply identifies immediacy with indemonstrability. Immediate truths are the indemonstrable principles of science from which the theorems are deductively derived, by demonstration. I shall refer to this tradition as the Standard Epistemic Reading.

My aim in the present article is to offer an alternative to the standard view. On the one hand, I maintain that immediacy is a feature of propositions essentially related to their epistemic primacy in a given domain. Therefore, my interpretation should be classified as *epistemic*, according to the above definition. On the other hand, I claim that ‘immediate’ is not a synonym for ‘indemonstrable’. More particularly, I shall argue that Aristotle recognizes two different types of immediacy, only one of which is equivalent to indemonstrability. These two types of immediacy correspond to two ways in which a proposition can be prior to another: ‘by nature’ and ‘to us’. This distinction between types of priority, in turn, mirrors a distinction between two kinds of knowledge: knowing *that* a proposition is true and knowing *why* it is true. The main advantage of this alternative interpretation in comparison to the Standard Epistemic Reading is that it provides a better understanding of a famous passage (*APo.* 1.13, 78a22–b4) in which the way Aristotle employs the concept of immediacy is admittedly puzzling.

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not discuss the so-called ‘common principles’ such as the Principle of Non-Contradiction or the Law of the Excluded Middle. See *APo.* 1.10, 76a37–b2.

2 For instance, *APr.* 2.23, 68b30–2; *APo.* 1.2, 72a5–8, 72a14–18, 72a25–32; 1.3, 72b18–25; 1.9, 75b37–40; 1.17, 81a35–7; 1.22, 84a29–b3; 1.23, 84b19–31; 1.24, 86a14–16; 1.32, 88b15–21; 1.33, 89a11–23; 2.3, 90b24–7; 2.10, 94a9–10; 2.12, 96a8–19; 2.19, 99b20–2. For more references, see Bonitz 1870, 38a24–36.

3 See, for instance, Alexander, *In APr. I* 358.5–359.14 Wallies; *In Top.* 16.40–6 Wallies; Themistius *In APo.* 6.28–9 Wallies; Philoponus, *In APo.* 24.7–14 Wallies; Aquinas, *In APo.* lib. 1, l.4, n. 14; Bonitz 1870, 38a24–5; Ross 1949, 509; Hadgopoulos 1977, 32; McKirahan 1992, 25; Mignucci 2007, 152; Angioni 2012, 16–23; Crager 2015, 15; Bronstein 2016, 109; Malink 2017, 176; Morison 2019, 14, 17–22; Gasser-Wingate 2020, 11.

## 2 A Problem and Two *Desiderata*

Aristotle's motivation for characterizing scientific expertise as composed of two different cognitive dispositions—namely, demonstrative and noetic knowledge—is made clear in *APo.* 1.3. If every proposition in a domain were demonstrable, then either all demonstrative chains would be liable to a sort of infinite regress, in which case scientific knowledge would not be possible (*APo.* 1.3, 72b7–11), or demonstrations would have to proceed 'in a circle and reciprocally' (*APo.* 1.3, 72b15–18). Aristotle argues for a foundationalist way out: every case of demonstrative knowledge ultimately relies on noetic knowledge of indemonstrable premises. Actually, this solution can already be found in *APo.* 1.2, in a well-known passage that lists six conditions that scientific principles must satisfy (71b19–23):

T1. If scientific understanding is as we established, then demonstrative knowledge proceeds from items which are [C1] true, [C2] primary, [C3] immediate, [C4] better known than, [C5] prior to and [C6] explanatory of the conclusion. In this way, the principles will be appropriate to what is explained.<sup>4</sup>

As we have seen, Aristotle systematically describes the indemonstrable principles of science as primary (*πρῶτα*) and immediate (*ἄμεσα*), which invites us to read conditions C2 and C3 as an anticipation of the position advanced in *APo.* 1.3. Thus, it seems natural to take these requirements as the absolute versions of the relational condition C5:<sup>5</sup> while the priority condition (C5) warrants that a principle *p* is prior to a conclusion *c* that is demonstrated from it, the primacy (C2) and immediacy (C3) conditions ensure that there is no other truth in the domain that is prior to *p*. If there are no truths that satisfy the priority condition (C5) in relation to *p*, there are no premises from which *p* could be demonstrated. In fact, when Aristotle briefly explains each one of the six requirements listed in T1, he replaces 'immediate' by 'indemonstrable', and in other places uses the two terms interchangeably (*APo.* 1.2, 71b26–9; cf. 1.3, 72b18–20; 1.15, 79a33–8). If this intuitive reading is correct, first principles are immediate in the sense of being the fundamental premises that protect science from circularity or infinite regress.

4 All translations are mine unless otherwise indicated.

5 For the view that C1–3 are absolute conditions, while C4–6 are relative to a given conclusion, see Ross 1949, 509; McKirahan 1992, 24; Barnes 1993, 93; Mignucci 2007, 152; Bronstein 2016, 61–2; Zuppolini 2016, 200.

Nevertheless, there are reasons to doubt any interpretation—be it the Standard Epistemic Reading or some alternative account—that understands immediacy as the foundational status that distinguishes principles from theorems. One problem seems especially threatening to such readings. Let me spell it out.

In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle is not just discussing in generic terms the nature of scientific knowledge, but also presenting an abstract model for demonstrative sciences. This model has a particular underlying logic: the Syllogistic. A syllogistic inference occurs when a pair of categorical premises sharing a common term (μέσον, or middle term) entails another categorical sentence with the remaining two terms (the major and the minor extremes).<sup>6</sup> Then, it seems plausible to take ‘ἄμεσος’ as part of the vocabulary of Aristotle’s Syllogistic: ‘to be immediate is to lack a middle term’ (Barnes 1993, 94).<sup>7</sup> However, this phrase can mean different things:

- (1) PxS is immediate iff there is no M such that (PyM, MzS ⊢ PxS).
- (2) PxS is immediate iff there is no M such that (PyM, MzS ⊢ PxS) & (PyM and MzS are true).
- (3) PxS is immediate iff there is no M such that (PyM, MzS ⊢ PxS) & (PyM and MzS are true) & (PyM and MzS are prior to PxS).<sup>8</sup>

In a seminal paper on the subject, Barnes (1981, 31) argues that (3) is the only viable interpretation. If immediacy is understood according to (1), no propositions would be immediate.<sup>9</sup> Option (2), in turn, contradicts *APo.* 1.13, 78a22–78b4, where Aristotle formulates and compares the two following syllogisms:

Syllogism I:

*Proximity* holds of *not twinkling*

*Not twinkling* holds of *planets*

*Proximity* holds of *planets*

6 Cf. Geach 1972, 48; Koslicki 2012, 199.

7 See *APo.* 1.15–17, where Aristotle describes immediate predications in terms of ‘atomically belonging’ (ἀτόμως ὑπάρχειν), which he defines as ‘there being no middle term’ (*APo.* 1.15, 79a33–6; cf. 1.17, 81a35–7). Cf. Smith 1986, 49.

8 I am following the formulation used by Barnes (1981, 31), with minor changes. Lowercase letters (x, y, z) are variables for categorical forms: universal affirmative, universal negative, particular affirmative, and particular negative. Thus, ‘PxS’ means that P holds of S in one of these forms of predication. I am using the first figure given its superiority in scientific contexts (see *APo.* 1.14, 79a24–9; 2.8, 93a3–9), but, in principle, the three interpretations of immediacy could be extended to the second and third figures as well. For the immediacy of universal negative statements, see *APo.* 1.15; 1.23, 84b28–31.

9 That is, for every well-formed categorical proposition there is a pair of categorical premises (not necessarily true) from which it can be inferred syllogistically.



Syllogism II:

*Not twinkling* holds of *proximity*

*Proximity* holds of *planets*

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*Not twinkling* holds of *planets*

For Aristotle, Syllogism I is a sound argument, but not a proper demonstration, since it only establishes *the fact* (τὸ ὅτι) that planets are near without giving *the reason why* (τὸ διότι) this is so. Syllogism II, however, is a demonstration *stricto sensu*, since the planets' being near is the cause of their not twinkling. Now, Syllogism I is supposed to be an argument that proceeds 'through immediates, but not through the cause' (δι' ἀμέσων μὲν, ἀλλὰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ αἰτίου, 78a26–7). So the fact that its minor premise ('*not twinkling* holds of *planets*') is immediate does not stop it from being syllogistically inferred from true propositions, as in Syllogism II. Thus, Barnes concludes that interpretation (2) must be incorrect, and we should accept interpretation (3) and take immediacy merely as a specification of the concept of primacy.<sup>10</sup>

However, *APo.* 1.13 also seems to preclude any account of immediacy as an epistemic property that distinguishes first principles from demonstrable truths. The minor premise of Syllogism I, which Aristotle says is immediate, is not only deducible from true premises, but also demonstrable, given that Syllogism II is a demonstration. This prevents us from taking 'immediate' and 'indemonstrable' as synonymous. Actually, it seems, as Ferejohn 1994, 85 argues, that Aristotle's 'immediacy condition must be independent of whatever such "epistemic" features he finds lacking in the pseudo-demonstration' (that is, Syllogism I). If we take Syllogism II to be a full-fledged demonstration satisfying C1–6, its premises would also be immediate. If the premises of Syllogism I and II equally satisfy the immediacy condition, their status as immediate does not seem to depend in any way on the epistemic differences between the two arguments.

Given all we have seen so far, a comprehensive interpretation of Aristotle's notion of immediacy should pursue two apparently conflicting *desiderata*:

1st *desideratum*: We must account for passages in which Aristotle refers to scientific principles as immediate and uses the terms 'immediate' and 'indemonstrable' interchangeably.

<sup>10</sup> Barnes' ultimate claim is that this specification can be dismissed and the core of Aristotle's theory of demonstration could be preserved without the syllogistic framework with which it is formulated. I will not discuss this matter here. On the relation between the two *Analytics*, see Ross 1939; Barnes 1981; Smith 1982.

2nd *desideratum*: We must explain the first part of *APo.* 1.13, where Aristotle refers to a deducible and demonstrable proposition as immediate.

### 3 Immediacy and Priority: An Alternative Epistemic Reading

I shall now present my interpretation of Aristotle's notion of immediacy in the *Posterior Analytics*. Let me begin with his official account of immediate propositions (*APo.* 1.2, 72a7–8):

T2. A principle of a demonstration is an immediate proposition, and a proposition is immediate if there is no other proposition prior to it.

Aristotle seems to describe immediacy as some sort of primacy. First, he characterizes it in terms of priority: a proposition *p* is immediate (ἄμεσος) if there is no other proposition in the domain that is prior (προτέρα) to *p*. Second, the superlative form of 'prior' (πρότερος) is 'primary' (πρώτος),<sup>11</sup> which seems to equate immediacy with primacy: immediate propositions are the primary truths in a given domain.

However, in order to check whether immediacy can in fact be understood as equivalent to primacy, we need to specify what it means for a proposition to be a primary truth. Accomplishing this task involves identifying the type of priority Aristotle has in mind in the context of *APo.* 1.2. In this chapter, priority is discussed in the following passage (71b26–72a5):

T3. [Demonstrative understanding] must proceed from items that are primary and indemonstrable, because [otherwise] one will not understand without possessing a demonstration of these items—for to understand non-incidentally things of which there is a demonstration is to possess a demonstration. [Demonstrative premises] must be explanatory, better known and prior; explanatory because we understand something when we know its explanation; and prior, if they are explanatory, and we previously know them not only by comprehending them in the other way, but also by knowing that they are the case. Things are prior and better known in two ways; for it is not the same to be prior by nature and prior to us, nor to be better known and better known to us. I call prior and better known to us items that are closer to perception, prior and better known

11 See Lear 1980, 78; Smith 1986, 48; McKirahan 1992, 26.

without qualification items which are further away. The most universal items are the furthest ones, while the particulars are the closest—these are opposite to each other.

We are coming back to this passage soon, but for now I would like to stress the fact that T<sub>3</sub> is part of Aristotle's explanation of the six conditions listed in T<sub>1</sub>, and closely precedes T<sub>2</sub>. Context strongly invites us to take priority in T<sub>2</sub> in the same way as in T<sub>3</sub>, and we can safely affirm that priority in T<sub>3</sub> is an epistemic relation of some sort. First, Aristotle speaks as if the priority requirement (C<sub>5</sub>) follows from the causal requirement (C<sub>6</sub>), i.e. from the fact that the premises of a demonstration are explanatory of the conclusion, it follows that they also must be prior to it (see 'ἐντεῖν ἀπὸ τοῦ' in 71b31). So, it seems that the kind of priority Aristotle has in mind is causal or explanatory, which he elsewhere explicitly refers to as priority 'by nature' (*Cat.* 12, 14b11–13; cf. *APo.* 2.16, 98b17–19).<sup>12</sup> Secondly, he distinguishes what is prior 'by nature' (presumably, what is causally prior) from what is prior 'to us', which mirrors a distinction between what is better known 'by nature' and what is better known 'to us'. That is, Aristotle discusses priority (C<sub>5</sub>) together with the requirement that the principles must be better known than the conclusion (C<sub>4</sub>), and the latter is clearly an epistemic condition. As a result, the combination of T<sub>1</sub>, T<sub>2</sub> and T<sub>3</sub> gives us significant textual support to two intuitive ideas we introduced in Section 2: (i) primacy (C<sub>2</sub>) and immediacy (C<sub>3</sub>) are equivalent conditions (as argued in Barnes 1981);<sup>13</sup> (ii) primacy (C<sub>2</sub>) is the absolute correlate of epistemic priority (C<sub>5</sub>), i.e. while the priority condition requires the principles to be (explanatorily) prior to the theorems they explain, the primacy condition determines, in addition, that no other proposition can be (explanatorily) prior to the principles.<sup>14</sup> However, this simple and natural reading of *APo.* 1.2 needs to face an obvious challenge. Is it possible to take priority in T<sub>2</sub> as epistemic—and, therefore, immediacy as a feature defined in terms of epistemic priority—and, at the same time, meet both of our *desiderata*?

12 See Ross 1949, 53–54; 509–510; Burnyeat 1981, 127–128; Hankinson 1998, 160–161; Angioni 2012, 32–34; Goldin 2013, 199; Gasser-Wingate 2020, 11; Zuppolini 2020, 35.

13 See also McKirahan 1992, 26–7; Hankinson 1998, 160. In *APo.* 1.32, 88b20–1, Aristotle uses the expression 'πρώτας ἀμέσους προτάσεις', which might suggest that some immediate premises are not epistemically primary. However, Aristotle distinguishes here immediate premises that are *used first* in a demonstrative chain, as opposed to immediate premises that are *added later* so as to derive new conclusions from previously obtained theorems. See Barnes 1993, 197–8; cf. Ross 1949, 604.

14 For persuasive defences of (ii), see McKirahan 1992, 27; Gasser-Wingate 2020, 10–11, *pace* Ross 1949, 509; Ferejohn 1994, 81–2.

Before addressing this issue—as I shall do in Section 4 below—I would like to specify what kind of epistemic priority might hold between scientific propositions. Let us assume that a priority relation applied to a given domain of propositions generates the ordered set  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ .<sup>15</sup> So according to T2,  $p_i$  is immediate iff there is no  $p_j$  such that  $p_j$  is prior to  $p_i$  (i.e.  $j < i$ ). We know that Aristotle recognizes some kinds of priority as asymmetric dependence relations.<sup>16</sup> We have good reason to believe that this also applies to epistemic priority. For instance, he claims that, if we acquire knowledge of  $p_2$  by inferring  $p_2$  from  $p_1$ , our knowledge of  $p_2$  depends on previous knowledge of  $p_1$  (*APo.* 1.1, 71a1–9). He also affirms that, in this case, we will know  $p_2$  *because* we know  $p_1$ , and this makes  $p_1$  ‘better known’ and ‘more convincing’ than  $p_2$ —in the same way as whatever makes us love a given object is ‘more loved’ than the object itself (*APo.* 1.2, 72a25–32).<sup>17</sup> Additionally, assuming that there are different kinds of cognitive states considered to be knowledge, epistemic priority is always relative to a given type of knowledge, in respect of which a proposition is taken as more or less fundamental than another. Suppose  $p_1$  is epistemically prior to  $p_2$  in the sense that  $p_2$  is asymmetrically dependent on  $p_1$  in relation to a type of knowledge X. If so, we obtain knowledge of type X of  $p_2$  by inferring  $p_2$  from  $p_1$ , while our knowledge of  $p_1$  of the same type X is obtained without  $p_1$  being inferred from  $p_2$ . These preliminary remarks suggest the following generic definition of epistemic priority:

**Epistemic Priority** [for a type of knowledge X]: In a given domain  $D = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ ,  $p_i$  is epistemically prior to  $p_j$  relative to a type of knowledge X iff knowledge of type X of  $p_j$  is obtained by  $p_j$  being inferred from  $p_i$ , while knowledge of type X of  $p_i$  is obtained without  $p_i$  being inferred from  $p_j$ .<sup>18</sup>

15 For the sake of simplification, I am representing this set of propositions as a totally ordered set:  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ . However, if ‘ $x$  is explanatory of  $y$ ’ is an order on the set of propositions of a given science,  $D$ , it is false that ‘for every  $x$  and every  $y$  in  $D$ , then either  $x$  is explanatory of  $y$  or  $y$  is explanatory of  $x$ ’, i.e. the dichotomy is not satisfied. Thus, the set of propositions in a given scientific domain and the relation ‘ $x$  is explanatory of  $y$ ’ will give rise to a strict partial order (irreflexive, transitive, and asymmetric), rather than a total order.

16 *Cat.* 12, 14a29–35; 14b11–22; *Metaph.* 5.11, 1018b29–34, 1019a1–4, 11–14; 7.10, 1034b30–2; 1035b6–7. For a systematic account, to which I am very much indebted, see Peramatzis 2011.

17 See also *APo.* 1.2, 71b29–72a5; 72a29–72b4; *Top.* 1.1, 100b18–21; *APr.* 2.16, 64b28–38.

18 Given the transitivity of priority relations, ‘ $x$  is inferred from  $y$ ’ in the present and following definitions includes both direct and indirect derivations, i.e. derivations consisting of one or more applications of inferential rules of the relevant system.

Now we can apply this generic definition to T2. If 'ἄμεσος' is related to a specific kind of deductive inference, namely, syllogistic inference, immediacy will turn out to be a sort of syllogistic/deductive primacy with epistemological import:

**Immediacy** [for a type of knowledge X]: In a given domain  $D = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ ,  $p_i$  is immediate relative to a type of knowledge X iff there is no  $p_j$  such that knowledge of type X of  $p_i$  is obtained by  $p_i$  being syllogistically inferred from  $p_j$ .<sup>19</sup>

Despite being vague and not very informative, these generic accounts of epistemic priority and immediacy at least tell us that what makes  $p_i$  prior to  $p_{i+1}$  in a given set  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$  is the specific kind of epistemic dependence relation according to which the set is ordered as it is, which relates to a particular value for X in the definitions. Well, according to T3, Aristotle recognizes two different ways in which a proposition can be prior to or better known than another, which gives us at least two ways in which a proposition can be (asymmetrically) dependent on another: by nature and to us. Properly distinguishing between these two types of epistemic dependence, I believe, is crucial to understanding Aristotle's foundationalist project. This becomes clear, for instance, in *APo.* 1.3, where we find the following argument against circular demonstrations (72b25–32):

T4. It is evident that it is impossible to demonstrate in a circle without qualification, if it is necessary [for a demonstration] to proceed from items that are prior and better known. For it is impossible for the same things to be at the same time prior and posterior to the same things, except in the other way—that is to say, in relation to us, as opposed to without qualification—the one in which induction makes something known. In that case, however, knowing without qualification will not have been correctly defined, but it will be twofold. Or one of the two

19 For Aristotle, a proper syllogistic inference requires two premises (see *APr.* 1.25, 42a32–40), so by 'x is syllogistically inferred from y' I mean 'y belongs in a pair of premises from which x is syllogistically inferred'. If one would like to preserve the core of Aristotle's theory in the *Posterior Analytics* independently of any syllogistic notion, as Barnes 1981 claims is possible, 'syllogistically inferred' could be replaced by 'deductively inferred' in the proposed definition. As will become clear in Section 4 below, a reference to syllogistic or (at least) deductive inference in the definition is necessary to explain why the minor premise of Syllogisms I is immediate despite the fact that our belief in its truth might be inductively justified (see *APo.* 1.13, 78a33–5).

demonstrations is not without qualification, coming to be from what is better known to us.<sup>20</sup>

This passage contains the first of three arguments against circular demonstration. The argument is addressed to anyone who is committed to the view that the premises of a demonstration must be, in one way or another, prior to the conclusion.<sup>21</sup> As I have argued, what makes a proposition prior to another is the specific kind of asymmetric epistemic dependence that holds between them. For instance, if we define a demonstration as an argument in which the premises are explanatory of the conclusion, as ἀπόδειξις is defined in *APo.* 1.2, 71b17–19, then the kind of priority that holds between the premises and the conclusion is causal or explanatory—this concept of demonstration is what Aristotle probably refers to by the expressions ἀποδείκνυσθαι ἀπλῶς (72b25) and ἀπλῶς ἀπόδειξις (72b31), while τὸ ἀπλῶς εἰδέναι invokes the notion of scientific knowledge (ἐπίστασθαι ἀπλῶς) in *APo.* 1.2, 71b9–12. If one adopts an alternative concept of demonstration, related to some other, non-explanatory kind of epistemic dependence, the premises will be prior to the conclusions in a different way. That is, for one and the same concept of demonstration, there is a unique kind of epistemic priority attached to it, which gives us the following premise:

Premise 1: If (i)  $p_i$  is demonstrated from  $p_j$  and (ii)  $p_j$  is demonstrated from  $p_i$  in the same sense of ‘is demonstrated from ...’, then (i’)  $p_j$  is prior to  $p_i$  and (ii’)  $p_i$  is prior to  $p_j$  in the same sense of ‘... is prior to ...’.

Well, priority is by definition an asymmetric relation, which gives us another premise in the argument:

Premise 2: It cannot be the case that (i’)  $p_j$  is prior to  $p_i$  and (ii’)  $p_i$  is prior to  $p_j$  in the same sense of ‘... is prior to ...’.

20 I am reading οἷον τὰ μὲν πρὸς ἡμᾶς τὰ δ’ ἀπλῶς as parenthetical and ὅνπερ τρόπον ἢ ἐπαγωγῇ ποιεῖ γινώριμον as an apposition to τὸν ἕτερον τρόπον. I also read: γινομένη ἐκ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωριμωτέρων, favouring ms. A (Urbina 35) over Ross 1949, who reads: γινομένη γ’ ἐκ τῶν ἡμῖν γνωριμωτέρων.

21 Of course, anyone defending the method of circular demonstration would probably reject this view (see Barnes 1976, 280; 1994, 107; Lear 1980, 80; Malink 2013, 218). However, in *APo.* 1.3, Aristotle seems to be engaged in a sort of progressive argumentation. The second argument (72b32–73a6) is addressed to anyone who at least accepts the view that demonstrations cannot (directly or indirectly) assume what they are supposed to demonstrate, while the third (73a6–20) focuses only on formal features of circular syllogistic reasoning.

From Premises 1 and 2, we obtain:

Conclusion: It cannot be the case that (i)  $p_i$  is demonstrated from  $p_j$  and (ii)  $p_j$  is demonstrated from  $p_i$  in the same sense of '... is demonstrated from ...'.

The upshot of the argument is a dilemma (72b30–2). The advocates of circular demonstration who also accept that the premises are prior to the conclusion (in one way or another) must either (i) adopt an ill-formed concept of demonstration that conflates two different kinds of epistemic priority (for instance, priority by nature and priority to us) or (ii) distinguish between two different notions of demonstration (for instance, one 'without qualification', that proceeds from what is prior by nature, and another that proceeds from what is prior to us). What is particularly relevant to our present purposes is that, while option (i) is undesirable for obvious reasons, option (ii) is not committed to a *truly* circular demonstrative procedure and therefore poses no threat to Aristotle's foundationalism. That is to say, the argument in T4 works by establishing that either (i) the proponents of circular demonstration defend a truly circular method, but their concept of demonstration is problematic or (ii) the procedure they advocate is not properly circular as they claim, and therefore is compatible with the existence of indemonstrable principles in science.

Let me clarify the point. A *truly* circular demonstrative procedure, for Aristotle, would be one in which there is, for instance, a (direct or indirect) demonstration of  $p_i$  from  $p_j$  and a (direct or indirect) demonstration of  $p_j$  from  $p_i$ , as long as the word 'demonstration' here designates inferential processes *of the same kind*, in the sense of being governed by or realizing the same epistemic goal.<sup>22</sup> We know Aristotle famously distinguishes between knowing *that* and knowing *why*, where knowing *that* consists in recognizing as true a proposition till then not recognized as such, while knowing *why* involves identifying the causal explanation of a proposition previously recognized as true.<sup>23</sup> Correspondingly, Aristotle can contrast types of deductive inference

22 When speaking of an inference as having an epistemic goal, I shall use 'inference' to designate an intellectual act or process of reasoning, rather than a set of propositions with a given abstract property, such as being sound or logically valid. This use implies the presence of a reasoner that aims at a cognitive achievement and processes the inference as a means to that end. See Crager 2015, who consistently refers to demonstrations as 'processes'; cf. Goldin 2013, 198–200; Karbowski 2016, 133–4; 136–7. For the notion of συλλογισμός as an intellectual act or process, see Crubellier 2011, 26; Ferreira *unpublished*.

23 See specially *APo.* 2.1–2. Only in some exceptional circumstances one might come to know *that* a proposition is true and *why* it is true at the same time (*APo.* 2.2, 90a26–7; 2.8, 93a16–21). See also *APo.* 1.13, 78a22–b13; 2.8, 93a30–b14; 2.16, 98a35–b24.



based on their different epistemic achievements. In *APo.* 1.13, as we have seen, Syllogisms I and II are distinguished based on the type of knowledge they produce. Syllogism I establishes *that* the planets are near, and for that purpose proceeds from premises whose truth is more accessible to us, in the sense of being determined by perception and induction (*APo.* 1.13, 78a34–5). Once it has been established that the planets are near, this information can be used to explain why they do not twinkle, as in Syllogism II. In Syllogism II, the deduction is not being used as a tool to decide whether a problematic proposition is true or false, but to display the cause of a previously recognized truth. For that purpose, it proceeds not from premises whose content is somehow more easily available to us, but from premises expressing facts that are the fundamental grounds of the fact expressed by the conclusion and precede it in the causal order of reality.

Here it becomes clear that different types of priority may hold between propositions (mainly, priority to us and priority by nature), since different epistemic goals may govern the inferences in which these propositions take part. The same, of course, applies to epistemic primacy. A proposition that plays the role of a fundamental premise when we intend to establish the truths of a given domain may not function in the same way when it comes to organizing these truths based on their causal connections. At this juncture, it might be useful to recall that Aristotle in fact addresses and attempts to solve two different problems of infinite regress in the *Posterior Analytics*.<sup>24</sup> The foundationalist position we are familiar with from *APo.* 1.3 addresses the following question:

**The ‘Demonstration’ Regress:** Is every demonstration based on premises that are themselves known by demonstration?

As we know, Aristotle answers this question negatively by postulating a non-demonstrative type of understanding called *νοῦς*.<sup>25</sup> However, he is also disturbed by a second kind of infinite regress. The *Posterior Analytics* begin with the statement that every ‘rational learning’ (that is, inferential learning, inductive or deductive) depends on pre-existing knowledge (*APo.* 1.1, 71a1–9). This passage could give rise to the following worry:

24 I argued for this view in detail in Zuppolini 2020, 35–7.

25 See *APo.* 1.33, 88b33–7. For an argument that this passage identifies non-demonstrative understanding with *νοῦς*, see Morison 2019, 16–17. See also Ross 1949, 606–7; Barnes 1993, 199; Bronstein 2016, 52 n. 2.



**The 'Rational Learning' Regress:** Is every rational (i.e. inferential) learning based on pre-existing knowledge that is itself obtained through rational (i.e. inferential) learning?

Aristotle famously addresses this question in *APo.* 2.19, 99b22–35, and argues that perception ( $\alpha\lambda\sigma\theta\eta\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) is the basic, non-inferential capacity that produces knowledge without any pre-existing knowledge being required, from which superior cognitive states can be obtained, including  $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ .

This picture is perfectly compatible with a foundationalist doctrine on causal explanation. Universal truths grasped by induction, including indemonstrable ones, are epistemically dependent on our acquaintance with individuals of certain kinds and their sensible properties. However, this type of dependence is significantly different from the way our demonstrative knowledge of the theorems depends on our noetic knowledge of the principles. For Aristotle, nothing prevents the principles from being epistemically dependent on other propositions, as long as they are not epistemically dependent in the same way as the theorems are epistemically dependent on them.<sup>26</sup> If collecting the truths of a given domain (knowing *that*) precedes the stage in which we grasp how they are causally related (knowing *why*), there is nothing surprising about the fact that our knowledge that the principles are true might be obtained by inferential means from propositions that are more easily grasped

26 According to rationalist interpretations of Aristotle's foundationalism, immediate truths are self-evident propositions the scientist can grasp by some sort of direct intuition ( $\nu\omicron\upsilon\varsigma$ )—for intuitionist readings of the *Posterior Analytics*, see Ross 1949, 85; Kahn 1981; Irwin 1988, 134–7; for the view that the principles are self-evident or analytic truths, see, for instance, Themistius *In APo.* 6.9–14 Wallies; Philoponus, *In APo.* 24.11–14; 25.2–6; 226.12–16 Wallies; Mignucci 1965, 107–8; Scholz 1975, 56. If so, these readings cannot grant that the knowledge of the principles is *epistemically* dependent on perceptual knowledge, since our belief in their truth is not justified by their being inferred from premises grasped through perception. Rather, noetic knowledge would be at best *causally* dependent on sensible experience, since the exercise of our perceptual capacities would play only a causal role by triggering the process that gives rise to our intuition of scientific principles, without justifying it (Irwin 1988, 132–137; Frede 1996). See Gasser-Wingate (2020) for a persuasive argumentation against the view that perception plays only a causal, non-justificatory role in the grasp of indemonstrable principles. Several scholars have criticized rationalist readings of the *Posterior Analytics* by stressing the fact that scientific understanding is not acquired by determining the truth value of problematic propositions from premises previously recognized as true, but in systematizing formerly collected truths based on their causal interrelations: Kosman 1973, 388–9; Burnyeat 1981, 112–15, 134–9; Matthen 1987, 4–5; McKirahan 1992, 243–4; Charles 2000, 265–72; Leshner 2001, 50; Lennox 2001, 161–2; Tuominen 2010, 140–1; Angioni 2012; Lorenz 2014, 300–1; Bronstein 2016, 125–7; Morison 2019; Zuppolini 2016; 2020.

at the preliminary stage of the scientific agenda, before the causal machinery of demonstration has been put in place.<sup>27</sup>

We are now in a condition to assign values for X in our generic account of epistemic priority and, in this way, provide more specific definitions. Let the expression 'Knowledge<sub>THAT</sub>' designate the knowledge of *the fact that* a given proposition is true, as opposed to the knowledge of *the reason why* it is true, which I shall refer to as 'Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub>'. The notion of Knowledge<sub>THAT</sub> and the way the propositions of a given domain can be articulated to produce it give us the following kind of epistemic priority:

**Epistemic Priority<sub>THAT</sub>:** In a given domain  $D = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ ,  $p_i$  is epistemically prior<sub>THAT</sub> to  $p_j$  iff knowledge that  $p_j$  is true is obtained by  $p_j$  being inferred from  $p_i$ , while knowledge that  $p_i$  is true is obtained without  $p_i$  being inferred from  $p_j$ .

Here, the relevant ordering criterion operating in  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$  is how accessible to us is the evidence for the truth of each of these propositions. In Aristotle's words, the set  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$  is ordered in accordance with what is prior and better known to us.<sup>28</sup> Given that immediacy is defined in T2 in terms of epistemic priority, Knowledge<sub>THAT</sub> and Epistemic Priority<sub>THAT</sub> generates a more specific account of immediacy:

**Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub>:** In a given domain  $D = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ ,  $p_i$  is immediate<sub>THAT</sub> iff there is no  $p_j$  such that knowledge that  $p_i$  is true is obtained by  $p_i$  being syllogistically inferred from  $p_j$ .

27 The knowledge of principles as *principles* (i.e. as indemonstrable premises from which other propositions are demonstrated) is a different issue. I have argued in Zuppolini 2020 that knowing the principles as such (and not merely as true propositions) requires some demonstrative practice in addition to sensible experience and induction. On knowing the principles as principles, see also Kosman 1973, 388–389; McKirahan 1992, 243–244; Lorenz 2013, 300–301; Zuppolini 2016; Morison 2019, 18–20.

28 Aristotle also describes learning as the process through which what is prior 'by nature' becomes also prior 'to us' (see, for instance, *Metaph.* 7.3, 1029b3–8). Therefore, the contrast between priority 'by nature' and priority to 'us' in passages like T3 only makes sense if 'us' in these texts refers not to expert scientists as such—who are concerned with Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub>, and for whom 'better known than' means 'causally prior to'—, but to inquirers and the conditions that make the evidence for the truth of propositions more or less accessible to the cognitive apparatus of human beings. On this issue, see Smith 2009, 54–5; Bronstein 2016, 127–9; Gasser-Wingate 2020, 8 n. 14, 18.

That is to say, a proposition is immediate in this sense if and only if its truth is not established by deriving it syllogistically from other propositions that are prior and better known to us. In more concrete terms, the decisive criterion for Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub> is the proposition in question being verified non-deductively by perception and induction.

As should be clear by now, a different kind of epistemic priority becomes relevant when it comes to Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub>. Here, a proposition is epistemically dependent on other truths when these truths properly display its causal explanation, and not vice-versa. The relevant kind of inference in this case is demonstration as defined in *APo.* 1.2, 71b17–19, whose premises must satisfy the conditions listed in T1. Correspondingly, the relevant kind of knowledge is no longer mere justified belief that a proposition is true, but scientific understanding (ἐπιστήμη), which is subdivided into demonstrative understanding (ἐπιστήμη ἀποδεικτική), i.e. the understanding an expert scientist has of the demonstrable truths in her domain of study, and non-demonstrative or noetic understanding (ἐπιστήμη ἀναπόδεικτος; νοῦς), i.e. her understanding of indemonstrable principles.<sup>29</sup>

**Epistemic Priority<sub>WHY</sub>:** In a given domain  $D = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ ,  $p_i$  is epistemically prior<sub>WHY</sub> to  $p_j$  iff (demonstrative) understanding of  $p_j$  is obtained by  $p_j$  being inferred from  $p_i$ , while (demonstrative or noetic) understanding of  $p_i$  is obtained without  $p_i$  being inferred from  $p_j$ .

When it comes to Epistemic Priority<sub>WHY</sub>, the ordering criterion operating in  $\{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$  is no longer how accessible to us is the evidence for the truth of each  $p_i$  (priority to us), but the place of the fact expressed by  $p_i$  in the causal

29 For this subdivision, see Morison 2019, 38; cf. Zuppolini 2016, 200–1. For the claim that ἐπιστήμη in the *Posterior Analytics* is better translated as ‘understanding’, see Burnyeat 1981. Although I fully agree with the central claims that Burnyeat advances in his article, I also believe that, as a translation of ἐπιστήμη, ‘understanding’ must refer to a type of knowledge (see Salmieri 2014, 5–6; Bronstein 2016, 18–20). As Burnyeat himself affirms, there is nothing blatantly wrong in reading the *definiendum* ἐπιστάσθαι in 71b9–12 in terms of ‘knowledge’, provided that ‘knowledge’ is understood as the kind of explanation-involving cognitive state that Aristotle attributes to expert scientists, which is, in his words, ‘much closer to understanding than to the concept which contrasts with mere belief and which philosophers analyse in terms of justification’ (Burnyeat 1981, 106). See Fine 2010 for a different view, according to which ἐπιστήμη is in fact a kind of knowledge in the modern sense of justified true belief. For a detailed discussion, see Leshner 2001.

order of reality (priority by nature).<sup>30</sup> Consequently, Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub> and Epistemic Priority<sub>WHY</sub> relate to a different condition for immediacy:

**Immediacy<sub>WHY</sub>:** In a given domain  $D = \{p_1, p_2, p_3, \dots, p_n\}$ ,  $p_i$  is immediate<sub>WHY</sub> iff there is no  $p_j$  such that (demonstrative) understanding of  $p_i$  is obtained by  $p_i$  being syllogistically inferred from  $p_j$ .

That is to say, a proposition is immediate in this particular way if and only if it cannot be properly explained by being syllogistically derived from other propositions. In other words, the decisive criterion for Immediacy<sub>WHY</sub> is the proposition in question standing for a causally fundamental truth, which means that there are no premises satisfying C1–6 from which it could be demonstrated.

#### 4 Meeting the *Desiderata*

Now I intend to show how the interpretation developed in the previous section allows us to, on the one hand, explain the fact that Aristotle sometimes uses the terms ‘immediate’ and ‘indemonstrable’ as equivalent qualifiers of scientific principles (1st *desideratum*) and, on the other hand, to provide a coherent interpretation of *APo.* 1.13, where a demonstrable proposition is said to be immediate (2nd *desideratum*). Let us begin by having a closer look at the problematic passage in *APo.* 1.13 (78a22–b4):

T5. Understanding the fact and the reason why differ, first in the same science, and, within the same science, in two ways. [a] In one way, if the syllogism does not proceed through immediates, for the primary cause is not grasped, but understanding the reason why is in virtue of the primary cause. [b] In another way, if it proceeds through immediates, but not through the cause, but, of the converting terms, through the one which is better known. For, of counterpredicable terms, nothing prevents the one which is not the cause from being sometimes the better known, so the demonstration will proceed through it. For instance, [a demonstration] that the planets are near through their not twinkling. Let C be the planets, B not twinkling, A being near. It is true to affirm B of C, for the planets do not twinkle, and also A of B, for that which does not twinkle is near—let this be grasped through induction or through perception. Therefore,

30 For a similar distinction between types of epistemic priority, see Gasser-Wingate 2020, 10–12.

it is necessary that A belongs to C, so it has been demonstrated that the planets are near. Well, this syllogism is not of the reason why, but of the fact, for it is not because of their not twinkling that they are near, but it is because of their being near that they do not twinkle. There is also room for the latter to be proved through the former, and the demonstration will be of the reason why. For instance, let C be the planets, B being near, A not twinkling. B belongs to C and A to B, so to C also belongs A, not twinkling. And the syllogism is of the reason why, for the primary cause has been grasped.

In this passage, Aristotle identifies two ways in which Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub> differs from Knowledge<sub>THAT</sub> *in the same science*, i.e. when it comes to propositions belonging in the same scientific domain.<sup>31</sup> In doing so, he distinguishes two ways in which a syllogism can fail to produce authentic explanatory knowledge. The first failure, described in T5a, occurs when the syllogism is somehow explanatory, but ‘not through immediates’ (μὴ δι’ ἀμέσων), which prevents it from displaying the ‘primary cause’ (τὸ πρῶτον αἷτιον). The ‘primary cause’, for Aristotle, is the one that delivers the appropriate explanation of the fact expressed in the conclusion, and explanatory appropriateness is achieved when C1–6 are satisfied, including the immediacy condition—see οὕτω γὰρ ἔσσονται καὶ αἱ ἀρχαὶ οἰκεῖται τοῦ δευκυμένου in T1, 71b23.<sup>32</sup> The primary cause is the referent of the ‘primary middle term’ (πρῶτον μέσον), as opposed to middle terms that explain the conclusion only partially, or not from the relevant first principles (*APo.* 2.17, 99a21–9; cf. 1.9, 75b37–76a9; 2.16, 98b21–4). That is, syllogisms fail to grasp the reason why in a robust sense when the premises, despite being epistemically prior<sub>WHY</sub> to the conclusion, are not primary<sub>WHY</sub> or immediate<sub>WHY</sub>, which means there are other propositions that are epistemically prior<sub>WHY</sub> to the premises, without which an adequate, complete understanding of the conclusion cannot be obtained.<sup>33</sup>

31 In *APo.* 1.13, 78b32–79a16, Aristotle will discuss how this distinction applies to the relation between two sciences, when one is subordinated to the other.

32 See McKirahan 1992, 26–7; Angioni 2012; 2018, 178–9.

33 Aristotle does not spell out this first kind of failure here, but an example from elsewhere can be provided (*APo.* 2.17, 99a21–9). Someone can explain why vines shed their leaves based on the premises that (i) vines are broad-leaved plants and (ii) broad-leaved plants shed their leaves. If the demonstration stops right there, we cannot say that a proper causal understanding is obtained, since the fact that broad-leaved plants shed their leaves itself requires an explanation, viz. they undergo sap coagulation. Only this middle term, which is definitional of the attribute leaf-shedding, and therefore indemonstrably attached to it, can be taken as the ‘primary middle term’ (πρῶτον μέσον), as Aristotle puts it in this passage (99a25). For a similar example, see Mignucci 2007, 195. *APo.* 1.13, 78b13–28,

The section that mainly interests us is T5b, where Aristotle describes the second way of failing to obtain Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub> within the same science. This kind of failure is due to the syllogism being ‘through immediates, but not through the cause’ (δὲ ἀμέσων μὲν, ἀλλὰ μὴ διὰ τοῦ αἰτίου). While in the first failure (T5a), the middle term delivers *a* cause, but not the *primary* cause, here, in the second failure (T5b), the middle term delivers *something* primary, but not the primary *cause*. That is to say, this second scenario occurs when the premises are primary and immediate in some sense, but not in the relevant causal-explanatory way required for producing Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub>. This is precisely what would happen if one tried to explain why the planets are near through Syllogism I:

*Proximity holds of not twinkling*

*Not twinkling holds of planets*

*Proximity holds of planets*

As Aristotle makes clear, the example assumes that the premises here are grasped through induction or perception, i.e. non-deductively (78a34–5).<sup>34</sup> If so, their truth is established without their being syllogistically inferred from other propositions in the domain, which means they satisfy the definition of Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub>. However, Syllogism I fails to produce Knowledge<sub>WHY</sub> insofar as its premises are not epistemically prior<sub>WHY</sub> to the conclusion. Actually, the causal explanation goes in the opposite direction. The minor premise and

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might contain a different example, which can be associated with T5a for different reasons (see Themistius, *In Apo.* 27.31–28.4 Wallies; Angioni 2018, 163–72).

- 34 We should probably take τοῦτο in 78a34 as referring to the whole phrase ἄληθές ... εἰπεῖν ... ἀλλὰ καὶ ...’ in 78a32–4, since Syllogism I is said to proceed δὲ ἀμέσων, in the plural. Still, one could think that only one of its premises is immediate. For instance, Ross 1949, 552 attempts to meet our 2nd *desideratum* by claiming (without presenting an argument in favour of his claim) that Aristotle means that only the major premise of Syllogism I is immediate, despite the plural δὲ ἀμέσων (cf. Mignucci 2007, 196). However, as has been pointed out, if we go for the claim that just one of the premises is immediate, there are more reasons to take it to be the minor, since the major can be derived from the laws of optics and auxiliary astronomical premises (see *De Caelo* 2.8, 290a17–24; Hadgopoulos 1977, 33; McKirahan 1992, 216; Goldin 2013, 202), while the planets’ not twinkling seems to be established non-deductively through observation. Aristotle could be just assuming that the major premise is also immediate for the sake of the argument (see εἰλήφθω in 78a34), without much damage to his philosophical point, which is primarily concerned with the contrast between not twinkling and being near as epistemically basic properties (the first with respect to how accessible is the evidence for its occurrence, the second as causally fundamental). In any case, if just the minor premise is immediate, our discussion would not be affected, since the problem related to our 2nd *desideratum* would remain unsolved insofar as the minor, and not the major, is the conclusion of Syllogism II.

conclusion of Syllogism I are respectively the conclusion and minor premise of Syllogism II:

*Not twinkling* holds of *proximity*  
*Proximity* holds of *planets*  


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*Not twinkling* holds of *planets*

Since Syllogism II is a demonstration in the strict sense, its minor premise is explanatory of, and hence epistemically prior<sub>WHY</sub> to the conclusion. Since Epistemic Priority<sub>WHY</sub> is an asymmetric relation (as priority relations in general are), the minor premise of Syllogism I cannot be epistemically prior<sub>WHY</sub> to the conclusion, which prevents the inference from producing causal-explanatory knowledge (cf. *APo.* 2.16, 98b4–24).

Now, given the interpretation developed in Section 3 above, the fact that there is a sound syllogism or even a demonstration deducing *p* does not prevent *p* from being immediate in one sense or another. The fact that '*not twinkling* holds of *planets*' is the conclusion of Syllogism II does not prevent it from being immediate<sub>THAT</sub>, since Syllogism II is meant to articulate the causal explanation of a conclusion already known to be true, not produce knowledge that it is true based on premises independently recognized as true. Similarly, the fact that '*proximity* holds of *planets*' is the conclusion of Syllogism I does not prevent it from being immediate<sub>WHY</sub>, since Syllogism I is meant to produce knowledge that its conclusion is true based on premises independently recognized as true, not articulate the causal explanation of a conclusion already known to be true. Despite being coextensive attributes, *not-twinkling* and *being proximate* differ in respect to the functions they can play in actual inferences aimed at concrete epistemic results.<sup>35</sup> On the one hand, *not-twinkling* is a directly observable feature of planets, closer to perception and therefore better known to us in comparison to *being proximate*. This allows '*not twinkling* holds of *planets*' to be grasped non-deductively and used as a premise from which the truth of '*proximity* holds of *planets*' can be deductively established. On the other hand, for Aristotle, *being proximate* is an essential predicate of planets, one of their causally fundamental features, and the explanation of

35 If the major premises of Syllogisms I and II are true, their terms are counterpredicable and coextensive. The example is supposed to work under some sort of domain restriction (probably ranging over heavenly bodies of a certain sort) and in conformity with Aristotle's astronomical beliefs, according to which planets are closer to the Earth in comparison to the stars in the composition of celestial spheres. On this domain restriction, see Ferejohn 1994, 86 n. 14; 2013, 76 n. 32.



their *not-twinkling* (see *De Caelo* 2.8, 290a17–24).<sup>36</sup> This allows ‘proximity holds of planets’ to be a premise from which ‘*not twinkling* holds of planets’ is demonstrated, without being itself the conclusion of a demonstration.

It is easy to see how this picture enables us to meet our 1st *desideratum*. The principles of sciences are immediate in the sense of being primary by nature, and not to us. That is to say, principles are immediate<sub>WHY</sub>, which means we cannot obtain scientific understanding of them by deriving them syllogistically from propositions that provide their causal explanation. If so, whenever ‘immediate’ means immediate<sub>WHY</sub>, ‘immediate’ and ‘indemonstrable’ are equivalent expressions and can be used interchangeably. This happens in passages in which the kind of inference under consideration is demonstrative in the strict sense—i.e. a deductive argument that successfully explains a previously recognized truth—including 71b26–7 (in T<sub>3</sub>), where Aristotle refers to the primacy and immediacy conditions by stating that the principles must be ‘primary and indemonstrable’.

The distinction between immediate<sub>THAT</sub> and immediate<sub>WHY</sub> is also the key to solving the puzzle in *APo.* 1.13, our 2nd *desideratum*. If Aristotle recognizes not one, but two types of immediacy, he can describe deducible and demonstrable propositions as ‘immediate’ without contradicting how he uses the term elsewhere. Syllogism I and Syllogism II differ in respect of the types of knowledge they give rise to. While Syllogism I is primarily used to determine the truth-value of a problematic proposition, Syllogism II puts together the explanation of a proposition already known to be true. If so, these syllogisms impose different conditions for immediacy. On the one hand, the minor premise in Syllogism I is immediate<sub>THAT</sub>, i.e. its truth is not established by means of a syllogistic argument proceeding from premises whose truth is more accessible

36 For the view that being a proximate celestial body is an essential feature of planets, see Koslicki 2012; Ferejohn 2013, 105. Goldin 2013 argues that Aristotle endorses a foundationalist doctrine on causal explanation, but a coherentist view on justification. According to this author, Syllogism I depends on a scientifically adequate apprehension of which celestial bodies are planets, a task that already ‘presupposes a noetic grasp of the essence of a planet’ (Goldin 2013, 202–3). Thus, justification would be a circular epistemological process in the sense that noetic knowledge emerges from and is justified by sensible experience, but our grasp of facts through sensible experience is also justified and endorsed by our noetic grasp of the relevant essences (201–4). However, it has been persuasively argued in the literature that (i) the noetic grasp of the essence of a natural kind depends on grasping that essence as explanatory of the kind’s demonstrable attributes (Kosman 1973, 383–9; Charles 2000, 265–72; Bronstein 2016, 190–5; 222) and (ii) the existence of a natural kind as such is attested previously to and independently of any explanatory or demonstrative practice, and therefore does not require proper noetic grasp of its essence (Charles 2000, 23–56, 179–372; Bronstein 2016, 114–20).



to us (*APo.* 1.13, 78a34–5). Its immediacy is therefore compatible with its being the conclusion of Syllogism II, which is an inference aimed at displaying its causal explanation, not determining whether or not it is true. On the other hand, nothing prevents the minor premise in Syllogism II from being immediate<sub>WHY</sub>, i.e. scientifically understood without being deduced from propositions that are causally prior to it. Its immediacy is compatible with its being the conclusion of Syllogism I, which is a sound deduction, but not a demonstration.<sup>37</sup>

At first sight, Aristotle's puzzling remarks in *APo.* 1.13 suggest that immediacy is a feature of propositions independent of any foundational role they might play in a given system of justification or explanation. In fact, some non-epistemic interpretations of this feature have been offered in the literature.<sup>38</sup>

37 McKirahan, who identifies immediacy with indemonstrability, tries to meet our 2nd *desideratum* by claiming that, in T5b, Aristotle is describing a situation in which the scientist does not yet know which of the minor premises (the one in Syllogism I or the one in Syllogism II) is in fact immediate and, by deciding which of them is immediate, she will find out which of the syllogisms is in fact a demonstration (McKirahan 1992, 217–18). However, the whole point in T5b is precisely to show that a syllogism can proceed from premises that are *in fact* immediate, in some sense, and nonetheless fail to deliver the explanation of the conclusion. Otherwise, the contrast between the situations described in T5a and T5b fades away. Additionally, Aristotle makes it clear that satisfying the immediacy requirement is a necessary but insufficient condition for an argument to be an authentic demonstration (see *APo.* 1.9, 75b37–40).

38 Smith argues that immediacy is not essentially dependent on any notion of epistemic priority, but rather a sort of proof-theoretic property of some members of a deductively closed set of propositions (Smith 1986, 49–55). He attempts to meet the 1st *desideratum* by taking 'immediate' and 'indemonstrable' as equivalent expressions, both of them meaning 'not deducible from any other true proposition', our option (2) (Smith 1986, 49–55; cf. Mignucci 2007, 152). However, even though Aristotle sometimes uses the term ἀπόδειξις and cognates in a weaker sense to refer to sound syllogisms in general (*APo.* 1.13, 78a30 and 36), this is certainly not the case in *APo.* 1.2, 71b9–72a8—a text that includes our T1 and in which 'immediate' and 'indemonstrable' are used interchangeably (see 71b27). Additionally, Smith's reading cannot meet the 2nd *desideratum*, since the minor premises in Syllogisms I and II are deducible from true propositions. Following a suggestion by Hintikka 1972, 58, Ferejohn successfully meets our 2nd *desideratum* by proposing the following non-epistemic account: "Every S is P" is immediate iff (i) "Every S is P" is true, and (ii) there is no term whose extension (a) properly includes that of S, and (b) is properly included by that of P" (Ferejohn 1994; 2013, 74–90). If all terms in Syllogism I and II are coextensive (in a restricted domain), their minor premises are immediate in Ferejohn's sense. This proposal cannot meet the 1st *desideratum*, though. Aristotle's favourite example of demonstrable truth, 'every triangle has the sum of its internal angles equal to two right angles (2R)', and all the so called 'καθόλου' *demonstranda* (*APo.* 1.4, 73b25–74a3) would be immediate insofar as they contain only coextensive terms. As Ferejohn himself makes clear, even some secondary, non-καθόλου *demonstranda*, such as 'every isosceles has 2R', satisfy the immediacy requirement, as he understands it (Ferejohn 1994, 93–6; 2013, 89–90).

However, as I have tried to show, it is not necessary to deprive immediacy from its epistemic connotation. It is perfectly possible to understand this concept in epistemic terms and, at the same time, make sense of how it is employed in *APo.* 1.13.

## 5 Objections and Replies

Before we conclude our discussion, let me consider some possible objections to my account.

*First Objection.* Aristotle recognizes perception and induction, on the one hand, and deduction, on the other, as alternative and compatible methods of justification. In several contexts, he attempts to show that a given truth justified ‘according to perception’ (κατὰ τὴν αἴσθησιν) can receive additional justification ‘according to argument’ (κατὰ τὸν λόγον).<sup>39</sup> That is to say, a given proposition *p* that has been inductively and empirically justified might get further support from a deductive argument that derives *p* from a given set of generic truths.<sup>40</sup> Therefore, even if Syllogism II is meant to explain the conclusion, it can also be taken to further justify our knowledge that planets do not twinkle—even though this truth has been primarily grasped by non-deductive means. This seems to prevent ‘*not twinkling* holds of *planets*’ from being immediate<sub>THAT</sub>.<sup>41</sup>

*Reply.* Aristotle’s commitment to the notion of Epistemic Priority<sub>THAT</sub> (or priority to us) indicates that different authoritative methods of justification may not be *equally* authoritative. In natural sciences, justification ‘according to argument’ is employed by Aristotle mainly as an ancillary procedure and is never presented as more relevant or decisive than empirical observation: it is especially demanded in domains in which empirical evidence is scarce, and preference should be given to perceptual justification whenever there is conflict between the two procedures.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, even if a deduction of *p* can provide evidence for believing that *p*, Aristotle thinks that a perception-based induction establishing that *p* is a superior and more authoritative justification

39 For references to passages in which this or similar distinctions are employed, see Bonitz 1870, 435a45–b10. For a detailed discussion of this topic, see Karbowski 2016.

40 For instance, the fact that the male does not provide the matter that composes the offspring is supported both by observation and by a deduction proceeding from metaphysical claims about the role of agents in processes generally speaking (see *GA* 1.21, 729b8–28). I owe this reference and my understanding of it to Karbowski 2016, 123–6.

41 I am grateful to Yu JingFang and Fernando Mendonça for pressing me on this issue.

42 Again, I am here much indebted to the discussion in Karbowski 2016, 140–54, who provides extensive textual evidence.

and, in this regard, criticizes other philosophers whenever their excessive attachment to their own abstract theories led them to neglect contrary empirical evidence.<sup>43</sup> All this is congenial to our T<sub>3</sub>, where what is prior 'to us' is not described as varying from one individual subject to another, in accordance with their respective preferences on method and justification. Rather, the prior 'to us' is what is 'closer to perception' (*APo.* 1.2, 72a1–3), i.e. what is objectively more accessible to the perceptual apparatus of human beings in general. If so, nothing prevents immediate<sub>THAT</sub> propositions from receiving *supplementary* deductive justification, provided that our belief in their truth is *preferably* and *independently* justified by non-deductive means.

Now, the goal that governs justificatory inferences is to answer questions such as 'why should I believe that *p*?', while demonstrations concern questions like 'why is it the case that *p*?', i.e. 'what are the real-world causal factors responsible for the fact that *p*?' (cf. Goldin 2013, 200). Therefore, if anyone asks whether Syllogism II can serve as a justification for the belief that planets do not twinkle, we could answer in the following Aristotelian terms. When a cook, aiming at gastronomical pleasure, produces healthy food, she does so 'incidentally', i.e. a cook does not produce healthy food *qua* cook, since this is not the goal that mainly characterizes the culinary art (*Metaph.* 6.2, 1027a3–5).<sup>44</sup> Similarly, nothing prevents Syllogism II from providing some justification for the belief that planets do not twinkle, especially for someone without access to the relevant empirical evidence. However, we should not say that Syllogism II accomplishes this task *qua* demonstration, since, as a demonstration, it essentially aims at explaining *why* the planets do not twinkle, a purpose that, for Aristotle, can be pursued only after it has been safely determined *that* the planets do not twinkle.<sup>45</sup> And, in this case, an independent and more authoritative

43 See, for instance, *De Cael.* 3.7, 305a33–306a17; *De Gen. et Corr.* 1.2, 316a5–10; 1.8, 325a2–22; *Top.* 1.12, 1055a10–19; 8.1, 1055b35–156a9. For additional textual evidence and a more detailed treatment of this issue, see Karbowski 2016, 140–6; Gasser-Wingate 2020, 14–16. The fact that Aristotle's empiricism involves such confidence in inductive justification is congenial to his commitment to the existence of perfect inductions (see *Apr.* 2.23, 68b27–9).

44 I am thankful to Lucas Angioni for suggesting this example.

45 Authors who deny that demonstration is essentially a type of justification include Burnyeat 1981; Matthen 1987, 9–10; Angioni 2012; 2018, 162; Goldin 2013; Karbowski 2016, 120–1, 133–4; Zuppolini 2016, 192; 2020, 35; Gasser-Wingate 2020, 11–12. Gail Fine argues that 'explanation and justification are different', but 'not exclusive' (Fine 2010, 138; cf. Irwin 1988, 530 n. 24). Although I agree that they are not exclusive, my view radically differs from hers insofar as I claim that a demonstration/explanation of the fact that *p* can, at best, serve *incidentally* as a justification for believing that *p*. For her, demonstration/explanation is a privileged method for justifying beliefs, which produces ἐπιστήμη

method of justification (that is, inductive inference proceeding from directly accessible empirical data) is available for the proposition that planets do not twinkle. This is precisely what confers to the minor premise of Syllogism I a foundational status when it comes to gathering and establishing astronomical truths (as opposed to explaining and understanding them). Such a special status qualifies this premise as immediate<sub>THAT</sub> even if we take Syllogism II as incidentally providing supplementary justification in its favour.

*Second Objection.* My interpretation arbitrarily distinguishes two meanings of 'ἄμεσος', and then claims *ad hoc* that, in T<sub>5</sub>, a special meaning of the word occurs in 78a26, viz. 'immediate' as immediate<sub>THAT</sub>. Additionally, the meaning of 'ἀμέσων' shifts between lines 78a24 (T<sub>5a</sub>) and a26 (T<sub>5b</sub>), from immediate<sub>WHY</sub> to immediate<sub>THAT</sub>.

*Reply.* Strictly speaking, my view is not that 'ἄμεσος' is ambiguous, but rather that the kind of epistemic status the term stands for can vary depending on which type of priority is relevant to the passage where the term is used. It would be incorrect to say that the word 'first' changes its meaning when we say, for instance, that country X ranks 'first' in human development, while country Y ranks 'first' in gun-related deaths. These two occurrences of 'first' presuppose different ordering criteria, but that does not mean that the word itself is equivocal. Similarly, there are two main uses of 'immediate' related to two different types of epistemic priority, which correspond to two different ways of being immediate, not two different, unrelated meanings of the term.<sup>46</sup> Actually, Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub> and Immediacy<sub>WHY</sub> are just two applications of one and the same generic definition of immediacy, which differ only in respect of the value provided for the variable X. Furthermore, the notion of Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub> was not arbitrarily introduced just for the sake of solving the interpretative problem related to our 2nd *desideratum*, but intuitively obtained by applying the kind of epistemic priority Aristotle describes as πρὸς ἡμᾶς in T<sub>3</sub> to his account of immediacy in T<sub>2</sub>.<sup>47</sup>

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understood as a privileged and favored type of knowledge that *p* is the case (in the modern sense, as justified true belief).

46 See Angioni 2012, 19–20, 20 n. 27, who speaks of two *uses* of 'μέσον', but similarly avoids recognizing two different *meanings* of the term. Cf. Themistius, *In APo.* 27.9–14 Wallies.

47 Compare Hadgopoulos 1977, 33–4, who argues that *APo.* 1.13 contains a unique notion of immediacy, which he defines as follows: 'p is an immediate premiss relative to a conclusion "S is P" = *df* p contains two terms P and M such that either P stands for the proximate cause of M or M stands for the proximate cause of P'. Against Hadgopoulos, see McKirahan 1992, 299 n. 24. One can see that the notion of Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub> is not artificial or arbitrary by noticing that ancient commentators were already familiar with a similar use of ἄμεσος that applies to particular statements about sensible objects. See, for instance, Themistius, *In APo.* 6.29–31 Wallies; Philoponus, *In APo.* 24.18–24 Wallies.

*Third Objection.* My reading seems to imply that the same proposition may or may not be immediate depending on the inference in which it is used and the epistemic goal that governs the inference. For instance, 'not twinkling holds of planets' is immediate in the context of Syllogism I, but not in the context of Syllogism II. This seems to ascribe to Aristotle a sort of relativistic doctrine, according to which the epistemic status of a proposition depends on the subjective intentions of the individual who performs the inference, and the specific cognitive results she expects to achieve.<sup>48</sup>

*Reply.* I do not consider Aristotle to hold any type of relativism. Quite on the contrary, I would like to avoid attributing the immediacy of a proposition to circumstantial epistemological conditions or subjective methodological preferences. Propositions are immediate<sub>WHY</sub> when they objectively stand for causally fundamental facts, and immediate<sub>THAT</sub> when their truth is objectively accessible to the human cognitive apparatus by non-deductive means. All I claim is that Aristotle's recognition of two kinds of epistemic priority commits him to the existence of two types of immediacy. Determining which of these types Aristotle has in mind in a particular use of 'ἄμεσος' requires identifying the kind of priority that is relevant to the passage in question. More specifically, the relevant kind of priority is given by the epistemic scenario under consideration, which might be the first, pre-demonstrative and inquiring phase of the scientific enterprise, or the second, causal-explanatory stage.

## 6 Conclusion

In agreement with the vast majority of interpreters of the *Posterior Analytics*, I have argued that immediacy, for Aristotle, is the feature that distinguishes primary truths from derivative propositions in a foundationalist structure. However, the traditional view—the Standard Epistemic Reading, as I call it—is that being immediate is the same as being an indemonstrable premise, i.e. a principle from which other propositions are explained, but which is not explained from more basic truths. My proposal is that Aristotle recognizes two types of immediacy, Immediacy<sub>THAT</sub> and Immediacy<sub>WHY</sub>. The latter, but not the former, is equivalent to indemonstrability. This reading meets the two main *desiderata* according to which the exegetical options should be compared and evaluated: it accounts for several passages in which 'immediate' designates indemonstrable principles in opposition to demonstrable theorems (1st *desideratum*), but also provides a plausible interpretation of *APo.* 1.13, where the

<sup>48</sup> I would like to thank Simona Aimar for calling my attention to this possible objection.

notion of immediacy is employed in an otherwise puzzling and incoherent way (2nd *desideratum*).<sup>49</sup>

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# Mixture, Generation and the First *Aporia* of Aristotle's *GC* 1.10

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## Abstract

This paper concerns the classification of the process of mixture, for Aristotle, and the related issue of the manner in which the ingredients remain present once mixed. I argue that mixture is best viewed as a kind of substantial generation in the context of the *GC* and, accordingly, that the ingredients do not enjoy the kind of strong presence within a mixture usually attributed to them. To do this, I critically examine the most promising versions of the standard view and offer a new interpretation of Aristotle's treatment of a puzzle about mixture in *GC* 1.10.

## Keywords

Aristotle – mixture – generation – potentiality – numerical persistence – uniformity

## 1 Introduction

What kind of change is mixing ( $\mu\acute{\iota}\xi\iota\varsigma$ ), according to Aristotle: a kind of generation, a kind of alteration, a *sui generis* change, or perhaps no single kind of change at all?<sup>1</sup> While I hope to show that this classificatory question, in itself,

1 Mixture is clearly not a kind of locomotion any more than generation and alteration are, even if, like those kinds of change, it somehow depends on or involves locomotion (*Phys.* 8.7). And it is clearly not growth or diminution, since it does not consist in the preservation of a single form while changing in size. At *GC* 1.10, 328a23–31, Aristotle contrasts the growth of a preponderant stuff that assimilates another to itself with mixture, which requires roughly commensurate ingredients and results in something intermediate between them (see also 327b13–14).

merits more careful attention than it has received, much of its interest stems from its connection to the intricacies of the process of mixing and to the constitution of mixtures—most of all, the much-debated question of the manner in which the ingredients are present in a mixture. This question, in turn, bears on the constitution of complex natural substances, the most paradigmatic of which are somehow composed out of elemental mixtures such as flesh and bone.<sup>2</sup>

The main textual basis for the standard answer to both the classificatory question and the question about the presence of the ingredients—as well as for their connection—is *De Generatione et Corruptione* 1.10's treatment of an *aporia* challenging the possibility of mixture. Aristotle says that the *aporia* seeks to determine how mixture differs from generation and destruction, and that getting clear on that difference will resolve it. Accordingly, interpreters from ancient times to the present have taken Aristotle's response to the *aporia* to explain or invoke, in particular, the idea that mixing is not a case of generation. Given that mixing seems to involve the ingredients being affected in respect of their essential natures, it does not seem to be a mere alteration either, and so it seems to be a *sui generis* process that somehow falls outside the standard classification of changes.<sup>3</sup> To substantiate the idea that mixing is not a kind of generation, interpreters have read Aristotle as positing that the ingredients remain present in the mixture in some 'robust' sense—stronger than what is ordinarily meant by potential presence; more than anything else, debate centers on *how* to understand this robust presence. Especially in combination with Aristotle's contention that mixtures are uniform, the thesis of robust presence has yielded interesting and sophisticated analyses of the metaphysical constitution of mixtures—one reason,

2 See Whiting 1992 and Bogen 1995 for discussions of the ontology of living organisms in which the manner of the elements' presence in uniform parts like flesh and bone plays an important role. The presence of the ingredients in a mixture might also provide a model for understanding the relation of matter and form in higher-level substances. Caston 2005, 269–74 employs the presence of the ingredient-powers in a mixture as a model for the way that different kinds of Aristotelian causes might co-exist in complex causal structures, including living organisms.

3 This is the standard answer to the classificatory question in almost all recent discussions of mixture in Aristotle, such as Fine 1995, Frede 2004, Frey 2007 (187–90, 194–7), Cooper 2009, Scaltsas 2009, Groisard 2016 (1–10, 16–23) and Henry 2019 (68–70), as well as the commentaries of Williams (1982, 143–4) and Rashed (2005, pp. cxv–cxvi). Krizan 2018 agrees that mixture, as discussed in *GC* 1.10, is not generation, but takes it to be alteration. Joachim implies that mixing is generation in taking the *GC* to be concerned primarily with the generation and destruction of elemental mixtures (1922, pp. xxxvi–xxxvii).

perhaps, that Aristotle's account of mixture has attracted attention from contemporary metaphysicians.<sup>4</sup>

Drawing on an understanding of the *GC*'s own account of what generation is and how it differs from alteration, I argue that, among the analyses developed to sustain the idea that mixing is not a kind of generation, some do not in fact succeed in doing so, while others are difficult to square with central aspects of Aristotle's metaphysics of mixing and of the material world more generally. All of them make Aristotle's response to the *aporia* strangely oblivious to the difficulty and complexity of the claims he is allegedly making.

In my view, Aristotle's treatment of the *aporia* is not meant to show that mixing is not a case of generation; in particular, it makes no contrast to that effect with elemental transformation, something that is often invoked as an interpretive constraint. Furthermore and somewhat remarkably, there is nothing else in the chapters on mixture to suggest that mixing is not a case of generation. We are thus left with no significant motivation for the claim that the ingredients enjoy a robust presence in a mixture. Mixing is in fact best viewed as a case of generation, in the context of the *GC*, and so it does not show the incompleteness of Aristotle's fourfold classification of change. And just like the standard answer to the classificatory question, this one too cannot be separated from our understanding of the constitution of mixtures and, especially, of the presence of the ingredients within them.

## 2 Some Remarks on Mixture and the Structure of the *GC*

While discussions of mixture often start from the alleged need to distinguish mixing from generation, we might do well to begin with a few observations about the role that mixture does and does not play in the treatise. For in fact, one key step that the *GC* takes toward its stated purpose of understanding all natural generation and destruction is to distinguish from genuine generation other types of process with which it might be conflated. This project is largely carried out in *GC* 1.1–5, where Aristotle is especially concerned to counteract what he sees as the monists' and pluralists' commitments to falsely treating generation as mere alteration and as aggregation respectively. Nevertheless, perhaps because aggregation is not a canonical change for Aristotle, he mentions only generation (and destruction), alteration and growth in the programmatic passages that open each of the first two chapters of the treatise (*GC* 1.1, 314a1–6; 1.2, 314b26–9); the first passage, moreover, specifically raises

<sup>4</sup> See Sharvy 1983 and Fine 1995.

the question whether generation and alteration have the same nature. A first observation is that the notion of mixture is absent from the entirety of *GC* 1.1–5. Evidently, it is not important for Aristotle to similarly demarcate mixture and generation from one another at this stage.

The term ‘mixture’ first appears in *GC* 1.6, and its role is apparently different from that of, e.g., alteration in *GC* 1.1–5. The agenda of *GC* 1.6–10 is to define touch (ἅφῃ), mixture, and acting / being affected (ποιεῖν / πάσχειν) (322b25–6), since greater clarity about these concepts is needed for the coming treatment, in *GC* 2, of ‘matter and the so-called elements: whether they exist or not, whether each is eternal or somehow comes to be and, if they do come to be, whether they all come to be from one another in the same way or some one among them is primary’ (*GC* 1.6, 322b1–6).<sup>5</sup> One way in which the account of mixture in *GC* 1.10 is relevant to our understanding of the elements is that we learn there that genuine mixture is distinct from mere *synthesis*, the placement of small bits of different ingredients side by side. It later turns out that the elements’ ability to undergo genuine mixture is explained by their most fundamental features: their common matter, as well as their contrariety to one another (*GC* 2.7). Indeed, Aristotle is at pains to show that only his conception of the elements can accommodate genuine mixture; even the superficially similar Empedoclean conception can accommodate only *synthesis*, since it denies elemental inter-transformation or, equivalently (so *GC* 2.7, 334a15–18), a common matter.<sup>6</sup>

In *GC* 1.6, however, Aristotle suggests that mixture is under discussion because of its apparent role in the generation of more complex things from the elements. But this discussion is puzzling. Aristotle initially appeals to the already discarded idea that aggregation (he will later add alteration) gives rise to generation, before suggesting that aggregation is a kind of mixture, though ‘what we mean by being mixed’ (πῶς δὲ μίγνυσθαι λέγομεν) has not yet been clearly defined (322b6–9). At the beginning of *GC* 2.1, after giving this definition of mixture, he will remind us once again that alteration and aggregation have been thought to account for generation (329a3–5) and then attribute generation and destruction—in light of *GC* 1.7–10, perhaps suggestively—to the elements’ changing ‘either according to aggregation and segregation or according

5 Translations are my own throughout. Though ποιεῖν appears in this programmatic statement, it is πάσχειν that is most important in 1.7–9.

6 Again, contrast the role of alteration: though Aristotle criticizes pluralist views for their failure to accommodate alteration, nowhere in *GC* 2 does he explain how alteration occurs, least of all at the elemental level. The connection drawn here between *GC* 1.10 and 2.7 presupposes that the account in *GC* 1.10 is meant to apply to the elements. I take *GC* 1’s discussion of basic processes, including mixture, to be general, following Burnyeat 2004.

to another change' (GC 2.1, 329a7–8). Perhaps by calling aggregation a case of 'mixture' and appealing to the idea that aggregation gives rise to generation in GC 1.6, Aristotle means to hint that genuine mixture can play a role in the generation of higher-level substances analogous to that of alteration and aggregation in traditional monism and pluralism respectively.<sup>7</sup> What does seem clear is that all of the processes or phenomena Aristotle here mentions—alteration, acting / being affected (ποιεῖν / πάσχειν), aggregation, contact and, however it is understood, 'mixture'—are on the agenda because they at least seem to be necessary conditions of, or in certain cases to give rise to or even constitute, generation. But also Aristotle emphasizes in GC 2.1 that, as his predecessors would agree, those primary things which (by undergoing the relevant changes) give rise to generation and destruction *deserve* to be called 'principles and elements' (329a5–8); this suggests that the processes by which generation from the elements seems to occur are on the agenda also because the elements' ability to undergo them will partly explain, and in comparison to competing theories strengthen, the elements' very status as elements.<sup>8</sup> In any case, Aristotle's justification for placing mixture on the agenda does not depend on showing that it is not a case of generation. It might even suggest that, in some cases, mixture can realize or constitute generation, just as aggregation is said to do on traditional pluralist theories. It is a different and still open question, of course, what role genuine elemental mixture actually plays, according to Aristotle, in the generation of more complex substances. Below (Section 9) I discuss a potential worry about my answer to the classificatory question that arises from considering the role of elemental mixtures in the generation and constitution of sentient beings.

### 3 Mixture and the Criteria of Generation and Alteration in GC 1

The absence of mixture from the first five chapters of the GC does not mean that they are of no relevance for its classification. In fact, while scholars have explicitly addressed the classificatory question about mixture, most often by contrasting it with both generation and alteration, they have rarely connected this question to the extended treatment of how generation and alteration

<sup>7</sup> Similarly, I can find no better explanation for Aristotle's surprising claim that aggregation requires affection (GC 1.6, 322b9–11) than that he means to prefigure his own view that genuine mixture involves mutual affection. Aristotle thinks traditional forms of pluralism cannot accommodate genuine affection (GC 1.8–9). Some have thought also that early atomists did not posit genuine contact between atoms. See Bodnár 1998 for discussion.

<sup>8</sup> I thank Tim Clarke for urging me to discuss these passages from GC 1.6 and 2.1.

differ from one another that spans *GC* 1.1–4. It culminates in the following criterion (319b6–18):

Regarding generation and alteration we will say in what they differ. For we say that these changes are distinct from one another. Since, then, the underlying thing is one thing and the affection which is such as to be said of the underlying thing is something else, and there can be change of each of these, it is alteration when, while the underlying thing, being perceptible, remains, it changes in its own affections, whether these are contraries or in between—for example the body, remaining the same, becomes healthy and again becomes sick, or the bronze is round but, while being indeed the same, is at another time with corners. But when something changes as a whole, without anything perceptible remaining as the same underlying thing, but rather as e.g. from the seed as a whole, [there comes to be] blood or from water, air, or from air as a whole, water, this sort of thing is already generation, and destruction of the other.

This distinction is puzzling for at least two reasons. First it appears to put too strong a condition on what qualifies as a generation: is there really *no* persistent perceptible subject in any case of generation? However, I will draw only on the converse, that a case of being affected in which there is no persistent perceptible subject is a case of generation.<sup>9</sup> Second, Aristotle does not clarify the notion of a perceptible subject, which appears where we might expect to find, perhaps less informatively, the notion of a composite substance. We might take the notion of a perceptible subject to amount to a relatively less demanding standard for what qualifies as a substance. Aristotle's elements, as perceptible bodies, seem to meet this standard, and, accordingly, their transformation is treated as substantial generation and destruction.<sup>10</sup> But whatever one makes of the notion of a perceptible subject here, it is clear that there is a less demanding perspective in play in the *GC*. So long as we are trying to understand the perspective of the *GC*, the four elements and the processes by which they come to be should not be judged according to the standards of, for example, *Metaph.* 7.16, 1040b5–9, which relegates the elements to non-substance for being mere heaps and lacking unity. It would be misleading to associate the view that mixing is not a kind of generation, as allegedly articulated in

9 I take both generation and alteration to be changes of something 'as a whole'; since mixing seems also to be a change of the ingredients as wholes (see Section 6 below on *De Sensu* 3), I leave aside this condition in the remainder of this essay.

10 They are also natural beings. See *Phys.* 8.4 and the helpful discussion in Kelsey 2003, 61–6.

the GC, with the idea that mixtures are mere heaps and lack unity, and are in that respect not genuine substances, especially since we would for the same reasons have to relegate the elements and their transformations accordingly.<sup>11</sup>

If we take the GC's own distinction between generation and alteration as a starting point in thinking about the classification of mixture, we should ask whether a perceptible subject persists into the mixture. It is then reasonable to focus on whether the ingredients as wholes (e.g. the elements) persist. For in the case of elemental mixture it is implausible to focus on some component or constituent of the element-ingredients. Prime matter, construed as metaphysically underlying both elemental contraries, is not perceptible. And Aristotle's view that elemental mixtures are, at least often, of all four elements (GC 2.8) precludes appealing only to an elemental contrary that persists in actuality while another is changed or replaced.<sup>12</sup> one would have to appeal, at least often, to all the elemental contraries equally—in effect, to the elemental natures as wholes. Now, if the element-ingredients contain, in addition to the elemental natures, prime matter as a metaphysical subject for those natures, then the elemental natures will not be underlying subjects. On the other hand, to the extent that (as on a more revisionist reading) there is no such additional and underlying constituent of the elements, it becomes difficult to distinguish these elemental natures from the elements themselves. Thus, in considering how the criterion of GC 1.4 might apply to mixture, I will focus primarily on whether the element-ingredients themselves persist.

#### 4 The *Aporia* and Its Aim

The main text in favor of the view that mixture is not a case of generation is Aristotle's treatment of an *aporia* that seems to make mixture impossible. He states it as follows (327a34–b10):

For it is impossible for one thing to be mixed with another, according to what some say. For if the things that have been mixed still exist and are

11 These two perspectives seem at times to be uncomfortably close in Frey 2007 (see pp. 180 and 190). Given Aristotle's criterion in GC 1.4, I also find Frey's assumption that substantial generation (in this context) involves the creation of a new 'primitive' nature (2007, 189–90) too strong.

12 Furth 1988, 221–7 and Gill 1989, 41–82 and 243–52 hold that by persisting in this way in elemental transformation, one contrary can be said to 'underlie' the change in another.



unaltered, they are no more mixed now—they say—than before, but are rather in the same condition; if one of them has been destroyed, they have not been mixed, but the one exists while the other does not, while mixture is of things in the same condition; and in the same way [they have not been mixed] also if each of the things being mixed is destroyed when the two come together, for things that are altogether non-existent have not been mixed. Now, this argument seems to be seeking to determine how mixture differs from generation and destruction, and how the mixable differs from the generable and destructible. For it is clear that it must differ, if in fact it exists, so that, should these things be clear, the difficulties will then be resolved.

The strongest indication that mixing is not a kind of generation is (1) Aristotle's claim that the *aporia* is pointing up the need to distinguish mixture from generation and destruction, and what is mixable from what is generable and destructible, and especially that clarifying those distinctions would dissolve the *aporia*. We should thus expect Aristotle to address the *aporia* by explaining or invoking those distinctions, at least in part. It would make little sense to have to distinguish the mixable from the products of generation, so he must mean 'generable' in the sense of the starting point that undergoes a process of substantial generation. This brings the two distinctions in this passage in line: The distinctness of mixing from generation and destruction and the distinctness of the starting points of such processes seem to imply one another. I will leave this first indication to one side until Section 8 below.

A second indication is (2) Aristotle's use of the term ἀλλοιοῦσθαι ('to be altered'), in describing one 'horn' of the *aporia* and in summing up his account of mixture at the end of the chapter: 'things that have been mixed still exist and have not been altered (μὴ ἡλλοιωμένων)' (1.10, 327a35–b1); 'the unification of the mixable things which have been altered (ἀλλοιωθέντων)' (1.10, 328b22).<sup>13</sup> It would seem that the ingredients of mixture remain as the substances they are, while changing in their accidental qualities. Such a reading might imply that mixing is not generation, because it is instead a case of alteration, or at least involves the mere alteration of the ingredients.

However, the idea that the ingredients undergo mere alteration is no part of the standard interpretation, and much speaks against it. First, the distinction between merely qualitative and substantial change—allegedly the crucial element in resolving the *aporia*—can be read off from the very statement of

13 For convenience, I treat the *aporia* as a dilemma, and leave aside the option that one ingredient remains while the other is destroyed.



the *aporia* if, as the proposed reading maintains, it presents the two horns as the ingredients' destruction and their undergoing mere alteration. Second and relatedly, Aristotle's actual reponse to the *aporia*, that the ingredients are present merely in capacity (*δυνάμει*), though it is presented with much fanfare and recalled at the end of *GC* 1.10 and in *GC* 2.7, becomes superfluous and perhaps even misleading since, on the proposed reading, the substances that comprise the ingredients remain actually present. Third, compounds arising from the mere alteration of intermingled bits of the ingredients do not seem to exhibit the uniformity that Aristotle ascribes to mixtures; I discuss this concern in connection with a different account below (Section 6). Fourth, it is unclear how elemental mixture can satisfy this account, since it would have to involve alteration in the very qualities that constitute elemental natures; facing this sort of concern, ancient and medieval commentators often distinguished between the elemental natures themselves and the modified qualities.<sup>14</sup> Whether or not Aristotle can allow that material stuffs can somehow take on different qualities of the same kind as those that constitute their natures while leaving those natures intact, he does seem to reject the possibility that the elements can undergo *alteration* in the qualitative contraries constituting their natures. For he rejects the possibility that one of the four standard elements is persistent matter for the others on the grounds that, e.g., fire would come to be from air by mere alteration and that this fire (hot air) would, impossibly, be both hot and cold (*GC* 2.5, 332a2–20).<sup>15</sup> Fifth, in *GC* 1.10, Aristotle characterizes mixture as displacing each ingredient 'out of its own nature' (328a30).

Aristotle must rather mean, with the term *ἀλλοιοῦσθαι*, that the ingredients are 'affected', where the concept of being affected is broader than that of alteration proper. Though we find neither an explicit statement of such a distinction nor a consistent regimentation of terminology (especially of *ἀλλοιοῦσθαι* and *πάσχειν*), Aristotle requires the distinction, perhaps most clearly in the case of elemental transformation, which is a case of being affected, but a generation nonetheless, and so involves what are in a sense qualitative features, but constitutive of the elements' natures. *Πάσχειν* in this sense is the topic of *GC* 1.7–9

14 See de Haas 1999 and Weisberg and Wood 2004. A similar distinction is involved in one version of the model of potential presence I call *UNDERNEATH* in Section 6 below.

15 Krizan 2018 takes the in-capacity presence of the ingredients to require only e.g. that, in a mixture of hot tin and cold bronze, the *hot tin* is potentially present in the result, though *tin* is actually present; this answers the above charge that Aristotle's actual response becomes misleading. Partly on the grounds that such a distinction cannot be made in the case of the elements, she avoids the fourth concern by claiming that *GC* 1.10 concerns only mixtures of higher-level 'composite bodies' (198), which can survive a certain degree of qualitative change (215).

and marks a crucial divide between Aristotle's elemental theory and traditional pluralism. The upshot of reading the *aporia* in this way is that for the ingredients to 'still exist unaltered' is for them to remain as the substances they are, their natures unaffected. Accordingly, in his resolution a few lines below, and at the end of the chapter, Aristotle explains that the ingredients do not continue to exist 'in *energeia*' (327b22–31) or 'without qualification' (328b17–19); they have not undergone alteration proper, but rather a kind of being affected that reaches their very natures.

What does this tell us about the classification of mixture? One might still claim that mixture as such has an overarching identity distinct from that of the change undergone by the ingredients;<sup>16</sup> in fact, one might claim that mixture as such is not a single kind of change at all, but rather an amalgamation of individual changes undergone by the ingredients. This would be one way of having mixture fall outside the scope of the fourfold classification of changes. Against the latter claim, I doubt that mixture is complex in this way. For the ingredients affect one another mutually and in such a way as to bring about a single, unified result, as Aristotle stresses by calling mixture a unification (ἔνωσις, 328a21). Mixture is comparable, in this respect, to the third mode of elemental transformation Aristotle considers in *GC* 2.4, in which two fully opposed elements each lose one contrary, e.g. fire and water become earth; though changing in different ways, they arrive at a single endpoint.<sup>17</sup> And against both claims, we will see that Aristotle seems to treat his account of the fate of the ingredients, i.e. that the ingredients are neither preserved in actuality (as alteration proper would require) nor destroyed, as already involving an answer to the classification question. Accordingly, the standard view treats mixing as a single, unified change whose identity is given by the identity of the change undergone by the ingredients, and though it is a kind of being affected, it is not an alteration proper.

16 The distinction between what kind of change a process is and what kinds of changes it merely involves is also in play at *Phys.* 1.7, 190b5–9, which points out that coming to be can occur by virtue of 'alteration' (ἀλλοιῶσαι), in addition to other processes. See also *Phys.* 7.3, 246a4–9, 246b10–20, 247a5–19 in the α-text, and 245b22–7, 247a20–7, 247b29–30, 248a26–8 in the β-text.

17 See *GC* 2.4, 331b12–24. Aristotle's claim that this third mode of elemental transformation is not 'into one another' (εἰς ἄλληλα, 331b12) might indicate that reverse process would not qualify as a single change, since it involves parts of a single element turning into two different elements independently of one another (and presumably by the agency of different efficient causes). For there is no obvious obstacle to such a process occurring. This would strengthen my assumption above that Aristotle's presentation of the initial process a distinct mode of elemental transformation presupposes (as I suggest for mixture) that it is a unified process.

## 5 Aristotle's Solution in Two Ways

After a brief discussion about the kinds of things that can be mixed, Aristotle responds to the *aporia* as follows (327b22–31):

Since, among beings, some are in capacity, others in *energeia*, it is possible for the things that have been mixed to both be and not be, in a way, in that what has come to be from them is something else in *energeia*, but is still each of them in capacity, [i.e.] those things which were, before having been mixed, and [which] have not been destroyed (ἐνεργεία μὲν ἑτέρου ὄντος τοῦ γεγονότος ἐξ αὐτῶν, δυνάμει δ' ἔτι ἑκατέρου ἅπερ ἦσαν πρὶν μιχθῆναι, καὶ οὐκ ἀπολωλότα).<sup>18</sup> For the argument was earlier in difficulty about this. And it is evident that the things being mixed both come together from having been separated previously, and are able to be

<sup>18</sup> δυνάμει δ' ἔτι ἑκατέρου ἅπερ ἦσαν πρὶν μιχθῆναι, καὶ οὐκ ἀπολωλότα (25–6) is usually translated differently. Almost all (Grosard 2016, 16 is an exception) take not τοῦ γεγονότος of the previous clause, but rather ἑκατέρου to be the subject of the implied ὄντος. And ὄντος is generally (Williams 1982 is an exception) treated as having a complement, namely ἅπερ ἦσαν πρὶν μιχθῆναι. Together, these two preferences yield e.g.: 'each [of the ingredients] is still in potentiality what they were before being mixed' (de Haas 1999, 24). Given the first move, the second is preferable on linguistic grounds, so as to preserve the transitivity of ὄντος from the previous clause (from which it is supplied). But the awkwardness of the thought that the ingredients, which enjoy potential existence, are potentially what they were is, I think, reason enough not to saddle Aristotle with it, and to prefer my alternative. See de Haas 1999, 24 n. 19 on these two options. Fine 1995 puts a great deal of weight on the standard translation; see n. 26 below. *De Partibus Animalium* 2.3 seems to provide support for taking 'each [ingredient]' to be the subject of the implied ὄντος, and is to this end cited by Whiting 1992, 86: 'for ice and all congealed liquid (ὕγρον) are said to be dry in *energeia* and incidentally, though being in capacity and in themselves liquid, while earth and things of this kind mixed with liquid [are said to be] in *energeia* liquid, and incidentally, but in themselves and in capacity dry' (649b12–16). It is true that Aristotle treats bodies which have been 'mixed' with others as subjects of qualities and as merely 'in capacity' what they are in themselves. However, this passage is embedded within a discussion of the ways in which things are hot and cold, wet/liquid and dry, and Aristotle seems to be here extending to wet/liquid and dry the earlier point made about hot and cold, that things that have their own (οἰκεῖον) heat are said to be hot 'in themselves', while those that possess heat from without (ἄλλότριοι) are nearly 'incidentally' hot (*PA* 2.2, 648b36–649a35). Aristotle then moves seamlessly from the passage in question to his account of how blood is hot: it is hot 'in itself' in the sense that being pale belongs to the account of 'pale man' or 'being hot' belongs to 'boiling water'; it is not 'in itself' hot but rather only hot 'according to affection' (κατὰ πάθος), insofar as what underlies is not (I take it, essentially) hot but cold (649b21–8). So I suggest that the 'things mixed' at 649b15 are not mixtures in the technical sense of *GC* 1.10, but instead like the examples of ice, congealed liquid and blood.

separated again. And so they neither remain in *energeia*, like the body and the pale, nor is one or both of them destroyed. For the capacity for them is preserved (σώζεται γὰρ ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν).

Aristotle's main claim in answer to the *aporia* is (3) that although it is something else 'in *energeia*', the mixture is each of the ingredients 'in capacity' (δυνάμει), and (presumably in this sense) the ingredients have not been destroyed.<sup>19</sup> This is what the earlier argument was in difficulty about. He then points out (4) that the ingredients can be separated again (which seems very close to the claim of in-capacity presence), before reiterating that they neither remain in *energeia* nor are destroyed, but now adds further support: (5) that the capacity (δύναμις) for the ingredients is preserved.

Taking for granted that Aristotle's response *ought* to involve the idea that mixing is not a case of generation, how exactly might it do so, given that it does not in fact mention generation? Perhaps more urgently, how does the proposed potential presence of the ingredients provide an alternative to their destruction, as Aristotle explicitly claims it does? The case of elemental transformation shows that these are not idle questions: since each element is, in capacity, the others, any reversible elemental transformation involves the in-capacity presence of the starting point after the fact, but is also a case of generation and destruction.

And so it has seemed inevitable that Aristotle is positing a strong form of in-capacity existence for the ingredients once mixed, stronger than the sense in which each element is potentially another, stronger than is compatible with the destruction of the ingredients, and stronger than is compatible with mixture being a case of generation. The latter two points, furthermore, can be connected in light of Aristotle's dictum that every generation is the destruction of something else and vice versa (*GC* 1.3, 318a23–7). I refer to this strong potential presence as 'robust' presence or existence. But how might an appeal to the robust presence of the ingredients go? I consider two strategies in turn, both of which I will ultimately reject. I focus first on their plausibility as readings of the text.

On STRATEGY A, Aristotle addresses the presence and recoverability of the ingredient-kinds, and does so in a sense directly, positing their robust presence;

19 Sorabji worries that Aristotle's appeal to mere in-capacity presence conflicts with the persistence of matter in all kinds of change together with his claims elsewhere (e.g. *Meteor.* 4.10–12) that the elements are the matter of (elemental) mixtures (1988, 67–70). The force of this worry, however, depends on how 'matter' is being used and what kind of persistence Aristotle posits. In the *GC* anyway, Aristotle denies that all change involves an actually persisting perceptible subject.

he does not posit the presence or recoverability of *numerically* the same ingredients that were originally mixed. His main claim (3) might thus be understood as saying that mixture is robustly the ingredient-kinds. But, while this reading seems to be what is needed for his solution to appropriately distinguish mixing from generation and destruction, what he claims is simply that the ingredients are present in capacity, with no indication of any special robust sense of potential existence. Nor do the other claims in Aristotle's response admit of a natural reading in these terms, since they do not mention in-capacity existence at all. At best, the claim (4) that the ingredients are able (*δυνάμενα*) to be separated might be understood as employing a correlatively robust notion of being able, and the claim (5) that the 'capacity for the ingredients' is preserved a correlatively robust notion of capacity, but there is again simply no indication of this.

Many interpreters, however, have endorsed a different reading of claim (5) (*σώζεται γὰρ ἡ δύναμις αὐτῶν*, 327b30–1), as positing the preservation of the characteristic capacities *of* the ingredients, such as fire's capacity to heat, rather than a capacity *for* the ingredients. This can be thought of as a variant of STRATEGY A (though it has also been combined with STRATEGY B below). For the persistence of the ingredients' characteristic capacities in a mixture would contrast with their extinction in elemental transformation, and so might be taken to constitute a stronger form of potential presence than is applicable to elemental transformation. Now, it is unclear how helpful this move really is, since the presence of the *δύναμις* is not qualified in any way, and an unqualified presence of characteristic capacities does not specifically suggest, nor is it obviously compatible with, a robust presence of the ingredients; on this reading, the text calls out for refinement or explanation that is simply not there.<sup>20</sup> Taking Aristotle to be talking about the capacity *for* the ingredients at least runs no risk of positing the unqualified existence of the ingredient-natures.

And in any case, this reading in terms of characteristic capacities is implausible. For one thing, as de Haas (1995, 23 n. 17) points out, Aristotle has not yet introduced the elemental powers, i.e. basic contrary qualities, so that an appeal to them specifically would be inappropriate at this stage; rather, GC 1.10 seems to be a general account of mixture, so that an appeal to characteristic powers would have to be understood as applying to ingredients of all mixtures.<sup>21</sup> Second, the idea that a capacity *for* the ingredients is preserved is more natural insofar as it easily fits into the argumentative structure of the passage. For it neatly follows from the fact that the ingredients can be separated

20 Some models of ingredient presence discussed in Section 6 below can be applied to the presence of the characteristic capacities.

21 Again, see Burnyeat 2004 on the generality of GC 1.

from the mixture. Moreover it supports the claim that the ingredients are neither destroyed nor exist in *energeia*; on the supposition that a capacity for the ingredients entails their in-capacity existence, it does so in precisely the same way as a few lines above (327b24–6), by treating in-capacity existence as third way between those two options.<sup>22</sup> Finally, if Aristotle were talking about the characteristic capacities of both ingredients (and it must be both ingredients to answer the *aporia*), we would expect the plural δυνάμεις. The singular δύναμις with the genitive plural ‘of/for those’ (αὐτῶν) refers to a single capacity related to both ingredients, and this is best understood as a capacity *for* those ingredients.<sup>23</sup> Thus, on STRATEGY A, the allegedly crucial work in Aristotle’s response—to explain why mixing is not a case of generation—falls to claims that are neither natural nor explicit. In addition, there is no extant clarification of the appropriate sense of robust existence elsewhere, with which Aristotle could assume familiarity.

On STRATEGY B, Aristotle appeals to the mixture’s being, in capacity, numerically the same ingredients from which it was made, and to the recoverability of these ingredients. This ‘numerical recoverability’, as I shall call it, ‘gives us a criterion for the potentiality of the ingredients in a mixture, which distinguishes this potentiality from other types of potentiality’ (Scaltsas 2009, 251). Numerical recovery does not constitute or ‘ground’ robust presence; nevertheless, since air which turns into water cannot turn back into numerically the

22 The characteristic capacities reading can also be tied to recoverability and taken to furnish an alternative to destruction and in-*energeia* existence, but these connections are less immediate.

23 Scholars sometimes see just two options for the meaning of δύναμις here: (i) characteristic ‘capacities’ or ‘powers’ and (ii) ‘potentiality’ (Sorabji 1988, 68; de Haas 1995, 23 n. 17; Cooper 2009, 148–11; Groisard 2016, 21–2). If ‘potentiality’ refers to the way of being Aristotle describes as being δυνάμει, and opposes to being ἐνεργείᾳ or ἐντελεχείᾳ, I think that translating the nominative δύναμις as ‘potentiality’ is rarely appropriate; for I take it that to be δυνάμει is just to be in virtue of, or according to, δύναμις in the sense of capacity or power (see my 2011, 390–404). And such a translation here is not necessary. The translation I have proposed conforms, in general, to Aristotle’s usage of δύναμις with an objective genitive specifying what the capacity is for. While Aristotle uses this construction for both active and passive capacities with an articular infinitive specifying the exercise and for active capacities with the state they bring about in something else (e.g. ‘the medical art [is a capacity] for sickness and for health’: ἡ δὲ ἰατρικὴ νόσου καὶ ὑγείας, *Metaph.* 9.2, 1045b6–7), I do not know of a clear case in which he uses it for a passive capacity with reference to the state its possessor can thereby attain. *Prior Analytics* 50a21–2 speaks of a δύναμις τοῦ ὑγιεῖν καὶ τοῦ νοσῶδους, which *might* be understood as a capacity for being healthy or sick, but is perhaps more plausibly understood as a capacity (e.g. of food) for being wholesome or unwholesome. Still, the meaning I propose is a small step from clearly attested usages.



same air (GC 2.11, 338b17–18), numerical recoverability seems to imply that the mixture is, in capacity, the ingredient-kinds in a stronger (robust) sense than one element is in capacity another.<sup>24</sup> In this way, if Aristotle posits numerical recoverability, he need not explicitly mention or directly characterize the robust existence of the ingredient-kinds.

STRATEGY B involves the more natural reading. For the three main claims of Aristotle's response are easily taken to invoke numerical recoverability.<sup>25</sup> In fact, the claim (3) that the mixture is potentially the ingredients can be translated more suggestively as saying that it is 'still each of them in capacity, [i.e.] those *very* things (ἄπτερ) which were, before having been mixed, and which have not been destroyed' (327b25–6). Similarly, the *aporia*'s demand that the ingredients not be destroyed, which claim (3) is meant to address, can be read as the demand that those very ingredients not be destroyed. At the same time, introducing numerical recoverability as the key to ensuring that mixture is not a case of generation may bring with it additional problems. In what follows, I first undertake a critical exploration of how numerical recoverability might be supported by the metaphysics of mixing (Section 6), so as to develop, on that basis, what I take to be the most important challenges both for STRATEGY B and, ultimately, for taking his response to show that mixing is not a case of generation (Section 7). Though the main focus is on STRATEGY B's appeal to numerical recoverability, much of what I say will apply straightforwardly to STRATEGY A as well.

24 One difference between my presentation of STRATEGY B and that in Scaltsas 2009 is that I speak of the robust existence of the ingredient-kinds, without requiring (or denying) that numerically the same ingredients with which one starts can be thought of as existing robustly.

25 I am unconvinced by Fine's arguments that they can only be read in this way, which are sometimes based on the idea that the ingredients themselves, though not actually existing within the mixture, are said to possess the 'potentiality to be actual'. Such a potentiality 'is only realized if the actualized thing is the same as the thing with the potentiality to be actual ... exclud[ing] the possibility that the ingredients extracted from the mixture might be [numerically] different from the ingredients already in it' (1995, 278). A weaker claim, 'that there is the potentiality for something in the mixture, distinct from the ingredient itself, to become the ingredient ... will not serve Aristotle's purposes. For in order to satisfy the skeptic he wants the ingredients themselves to be in the mixture, not some surrogates for the ingredients'. Aristotle must rather be saying 'that there is a potentiality for the ingredients themselves to become existent or actual [which is] some capacity or tendency in the ingredients' (1995, 339). It is worth noting that Alexander, in his explication of Aristotle's view of mixture, simply asserts that numerical recovery from a mixture is impossible, apparently on the grounds that it would require the ingredients' actual persistence (*De Mixtione* 15, 231.22–9 Bruns).

## 6 Modeling Robust Presence and Numerical Recovery

It is helpful to distinguish two aspects of numerical recovery. My aim here is only to distinguish these at a fairly abstract level in order to situate different approaches to numerical recovery within a common framework. The first kind of condition might be thought of as putting constraints on the intrinsic character of (portions of) the mixture: the mixture must instantiate the ingredient-kinds in a sufficiently strong sense throughout its existence. Furthermore, we know that the ingredient-kinds enjoy a kind of in-capacity existence, and the kind of presence needed for numerical recovery is specifically what we have been calling *robust* existence. Thus, UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE OF AN INGREDIENT-KIND requires that the mixture is robustly of that kind throughout its existence. The second kind of condition has to do with the numerical ‘persistence’ of one or another *individual* ingredient. TRACKING OF AN INDIVIDUAL INGREDIENT OF A KIND distinguishes the case in which some individual ingredient of a kind is numerically recovered when the mixture dissolves (and so persists potentially throughout the existence of the mixture) from the case in which, though the mixture is uninterruptedly robustly of that kind, and some of that ingredient-kind is recovered, numerically the same ingredient of that kind from which the mixture was formed is not. TRACKING plausibly requires at least spatio-temporal continuity over time for the (merely potentially existing) individual ingredients of a mixture—it should not hold e.g. of the case in which the property of being robustly earth instantaneously ‘jumps’ from one portion of the mixture to a spatially disconnected portion—but might in addition require the retention of the same matter, and might put constraints on how the mixture decays.<sup>26</sup>

What then might robustness, the kind of strong potential presence required to satisfy UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE OF AN INGREDIENT-KIND and to situate mixing between generation and alteration, amount to? It is useful to distinguish two models. Recall that a mixture is the result of mutual affection that reaches down to the ingredient-natures and yields a qualitative character intermediate between those natures. One might say that, insofar as the mixture has an intermediate character, it is potentially the ingredient-kinds, but closer to each of them than each is to the other(s); this closeness might reflect the fact that some but not all of the features that comprise an ingredient’s

26 The discussion here borrows, in terminology and content, from the much more rigorous and detailed treatment in Fine 1995. By ‘individual ingredient’ I refer to e.g. *all* the earth that went into a mixture, but the remarks here might be adapted to e.g. a particular portion of the original earth.



nature remain intact, or that all of them have been replaced by similar features rather than by their contraries. Thus, one might also say that each ingredient seems 'closer' to actual existence in the mixture than it would be in another ingredient: the ingredients might be thought thereby to enjoy a strong, *robust* form of potential existence. I'll call this approach **MODIFICATION**.

Even though it is true to say that the ingredients of a mixture undergo a kind of partial or weak modification of their natures, this cannot explain robust presence, and indeed, if such a modification is all that occurs, it might even rule out a robust presence. For the existence of a similar nature, perhaps one which shares some features with the original ingredient's nature, does not seem to count against the destruction of that ingredient; rather, a change in something's nature entails that thing's destruction (cf. Fine 2005, 286–7). Furthermore, the fact that a lesser change is required to actualize the ingredient does not make the ingredient enjoy a special sense of in-capacity existence. This approach seems to conflate degrees of similarity with grades of potentiality. And in any case some mixtures will often exhibit very minor similarity to their less plentiful ingredients; by one natural measure at least, neighboring elements will be more similar to one another overall than certain mixtures to their least plentiful ingredients.

A different model, which I call **UNDERNEATH**, acknowledges that a mere appeal to similarity cannot ground an ingredient's robust presence; it appeals in addition to the presence of the ingredients' 'full' natures at a lower level—below the surface as it were, or latent or unseparated. This approach exploits the fact that, for Aristotle, being present in capacity is often a matter of being present at a lower level. Consider the way that flesh and bones are present in an animal or the way that wood is present in a wooden box. It is not, one might say, that parts of a living animal or of a box exhibit only part of the nature of, or have a nature merely similar to, that of flesh and bone, or that of wood, respectively. As in these cases, the 'full' natures of the ingredients of a mixture are still present in capacity; in fact, we might say that the ingredients fall short of being present in *energeia* for reasons idiosyncratic to Aristotle's use of that notion, and might prefer to describe them as 'actually' present.

The above examples suggest a certain understanding of what it means for the full ingredient-natures to exist underneath the surface of a mixture: the ingredients remain present as bodily subjects to an extent, so that the relation between (bits of) the ingredients and the supervening character of the mixture approaches a (metaphysical) subject-predicate relation. Indeed, such an understanding fits nicely with Aristotle's distinction between generation and alteration in *GC* 1.4, since the ingredients would persist as underlying subjects to a degree, but not fully. Some kind of subject-like presence also

seems to be implied by the idea, endorsed by some commentators, that the ingredient-natures continue to be exercised in a sense, but ‘antagonistically’ to one another, keeping each other in check and/or cancelling out each other’s ordinary effects.<sup>27</sup> But if the ingredients are present, at some level, as quasi-subjects or body-like entities with their ‘full natures’ intact, it would seem that they cannot be co-located, just like the flesh and bone in an animal body or the wood and metal in a box. And so it seems that some portions of a mixture will be one ingredient-kind, and others another; mixtures turn out to be non-uniform below the qualitatively intermediate level of appearance.

The question of what is required to satisfy the other kind of sub-condition, TRACKING, given such an understanding of robust presence, is complex. One issue is what TRACKING requires *within* the mixture. The above conception of robust presence is usually, but I think need not be, combined with the view that numerical recovery requires that each ingredient-kind is robustly present in the same portion of matter throughout the existence of the mixture.<sup>28</sup> But let us for now simply *stipulate* that, in one way or another, just when the mixture begins to dissolve, those portions that are robustly some ingredient-kind are potentially the (numerically same) individual ingredients of that kind from which the mixture was formed; the original ingredients have thus far ‘survived.’<sup>29</sup> What is more clear, and more important at this point, is that, given that stipulation, numerical recovery requires, and seems to be guaranteed by, roughly the following conception of the *dissolution* of the mixture: those portions that are robustly each ingredient-kind come to be actually that ingredient-kind, and they do so directly, without first becoming a different ingredient-kind.<sup>30</sup> If so, the (non-uniform) distribution of the properties of being robustly each ingredient-kind (and of being potentially each individual original ingredient) at the start of the mixture’s dissolution will place

27 On this idea see Frey 2007, 189; Cooper 2009, 152–4; and Scaltsas 2009, 251–2.

28 Scaltsas 2009 ties numerical recoverability to each ingredient retaining its original matter in the mixture on grounds that I find questionable (253–4; 257). See n. 32 below on Cooper 2009.

29 This stipulation is nontrivial. It will not be satisfied if, for example, TRACKING requires retention of the same matter but the property of being robustly fire comes to occupy different portions of the mixture’s matter during the mixture’s existence; even without the requirement that the portion of the mixture that is one ingredient-kind retain the same matter, it is plausibly required that that portion exhibit spatio-temporal continuity throughout the existence of the mixture. On the retention of matter, see the preceding note and n. 32 below.

30 One way in which the above is a simplification is that it presupposes a sharp distinction between changes within the mixture and the dissolution of the mixture.

restrictions on the portions from which each of the original ingredients can be numerically recovered.

The most basic challenge to this understanding of UNDERNEATH targets this non-uniformity, and so will apply with equal if not greater force to the stronger non-uniformity posited by the view that the ingredients undergo alteration proper (see Section 4 above). It is, furthermore, independent of the thesis of subject-like presence that led us to non-uniformity. The non-uniformity these interpretations posit might contradict Aristotle's claim that an ingredient can be gotten from any portion of an elemental mixture such as flesh, just as any portion of some wax admits of being made into different shapes (GC 2.7, 334a31–b2). If he means that, from any portion of a mass of flesh, (i) *as it is at the start of the process of dissolution* (i.e. without portions of it shifting around) water can be gotten from it (ii) *by the same process as from any other portion*, this would suggest that no portion is more strongly (potentially) water than another.<sup>31</sup> Such non-uniformity (especially on the reading of mixing as a mere alteration of the ingredients) also brings his account of mixture close to the atomist-Empedoclean view that mixture is a *synthesis*. And so it may not fulfill the conditions by which he differentiates his own conception from that one, namely, that mixtures are *homoioimerous*, with each part having the same account as the whole, as each part of water is water (GC 1.10, 328a5–12). Certainly the example of water leaves no room for a non-uniform structure below a uniform level of appearance. Now, one might insist that Aristotle's talk of uniformity in these passages refers only to the level of appearance, especially given that he cannot mean to replace the atomist-Empedoclean division into small or smallest bits with a kind of complete division or 'total interfusion'. However, Aristotle does not merely limit the extent of any actual division, but also appeals to mutual affection between the ingredients, which can achieve the kind of complete uniformity that is denied to the atomist or Empedoclean, and so his strictures against complete division need not set a limit on uniformity.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, I do not think that the uniformity of

31 It seems clear to me that he does have condition (i) in mind.

32 Cooper in his second note argues correctly against the view that mixture is a 'total interfusion' of the ingredients, citing Aristotle's objections to the possibility of complete divisibility as well as his emphasis on division into small (but not smallest) bits *facilitating* the mutual affection that results in a mixture (2009, 167–9). However, Cooper infers from this a kind of non-uniformity with respect the property of being potentially a given ingredient. This inference assumes (falsely I think) that a portion's being *from* a particular ingredient is a necessary condition of its being *potentially* that ingredient in the relevant sense. That assumption is plausible, however, if it is assumed that the potentiality at issue is that relevant to *numerical* recovery, and that numerical recovery requires retention of

mixtures can be understood in this weaker sense. In the quite technical context of *De Sensu* 3, Aristotle is willing to characterize the account of *GC* 1.10 as dictating that bodies are mixed ‘as wholes, everywhere completely’ (ὅλως πάντῃ πάντως, 440b3; cf. 440b11), as opposed to ‘smallest parts being placed beside one another’ (440b1–2); this very strong characterization seems meant to rule out non-uniformity at any level. Indeed, it brings to mind the language of being ‘everywhere (πάντῃ) divisible’ in *GC* 1.2, and might be meant to hint that Aristotle’s mixtures exhibit the same degree of uniformity that a total interfusion would exhibit, if only it were possible.<sup>33</sup>

A second challenge targets the subject-like presence of the ingredients below the uniform character of the mixture. Such presence might come closer to accommodating Aristotle’s claim that each ingredient is brought ‘out of its own nature’ (*GC* 1.10, 328a30) than the actual persistence of the ingredient-substances implied by the alteration reading above (Section 4). But note that the ingredients are said to be brought out of their natures as a result of mutual affection or, more specifically, a mutual affection that is attributed to the fact that *contraries* affect one another (*GC* 1.10, 328a31–3; 2.7, 334b20–1); for example, ‘what is actually hot is potentially cold’ and vice versa (*GC* 2.7, 334b21–2). Aristotle is drawing (explicitly at *GC* 2.7, 334b21) on his account of being affected in *GC* 1.7 (especially 323b29–324a3), where the idea that contraries (i.e. contrary things) in particular are subject to mutual affection is broken down into two distinct points. Contrary properties and the underlying matter can both be said to be affected, but in different ways (324a13–24; cf. also 1.6, 322b16–19); presumably, contrary properties are replaced by different properties along the same contrariety, while matter takes on these new properties. Contrary things are ‘driven out of their own natures’ (*GC* 1.7, 323b28–9) by one another insofar as one contrary property can replace another in the latter’s underlying matter. This picture of mutual affection neither captures nor explains the idea that the ingredients remain intact below the level of uniform appearance.<sup>34</sup>

Finally, in Aristotle’s account of qualitative intermediacy in *Metaph.* 10.7, there is no role for a non-uniform or subject-like presence of the ingredients.

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the original matter. These theses are not explicit in Cooper’s second note, though the first note endorses numerical recoverability.

33 This hint, presumably, led Beare 1908 to translate: ‘wholly blent together by interpenetration.’

34 The criticisms in this and the following paragraph do not appeal to the sheer impossibility of different properties from the same qualitative range being present in the same place but at different levels, something which late ancient and medieval commentators often sought to explain. I do not find the issue straightforward.

Aristotle argues there that intermediate qualities are 'out of', and 'compounds of', the poles of the relevant contrariety; a composition of contrary qualities (e.g. white and black) in different ratios yields various intermediate actual characters (e.g. red). This account of qualitative intermediacy is evidently meant to be general (he speaks throughout of 'all' intermediates), and seems to be applied to a range of cases, such as flavor, smell and motion, as Fine emphasizes (1995, 308–9) and, most importantly, to color in *De Sensu* 3 (color is also an example used throughout *Metaph.* 10.7). There, Aristotle is especially concerned to deny that intermediate colors emerge from the mere juxtaposition (*synthesis*) of black and white bits. He explicitly draws on his account of mixture in GC 1.10 (440b3–4, 440b12–13), and claims that 'mixed' colors arise through an underlying genuine mixture of bodies, not a mere juxtaposition, with different intermediate colors arising through different ratios of bodies being mixed (440a31–b25). To my earlier point about the characterization of GC 1.10 as positing that bodies undergo mixture 'as wholes, everywhere completely' we may add the following. Consider how the intermediate ('mixed') color is related to the 'bodies' on whose mixture it depends. If color is one of the qualitative dimensions, mutual affection along which *constitutes* the mixing of the relevant bodies, Aristotle's claim that mixing of colors involves mixing of the relevant *bodies* seems intended to indicate that uniformity goes deeper than that qualitative dimension. On the other hand, suppose that the mutual affection that constitutes the mixing of the relevant bodies is along a lower-level qualitative dimension, such as temperature. In this case too, there is good reason to reject the view that this mixture of bodies involves a non-uniform distribution of hot and cold below the level of its uniform intermediate temperature. For, since Aristotle has argued, based on a *general* account of qualitative intermediacy, against the possibility of uniform intermediate color emerging from a non-uniform juxtaposition of black and white below it, it is not easy to see how he could, in the same breath, mean to rely on a uniform intermediate temperature arising from a non-uniform juxtaposition of hot and cold one level down. In general, given the availability of *Metaph.* 10.7's account of qualitative intermediacy, which is meant to be general, there is every reason to look to it as an account of the qualitative intermediacy of mixtures rather than to the model of flesh and bone in an animal body; the animal body does not after all exhibit qualitative intermediacy between its uniform parts.<sup>35</sup>

Applied to mixtures, this account of qualitative intermediacy rejects the idea that the ingredients continue to exist as quasi-subjects at a lower level.

35 On the account of intermediacy in *Metaph.* 10.7 and its significance, see Castelli 2018, esp. 194–6.

Instead, 'at the most basic level of analysis ... we do not have a decomposition of the mixture into the elements at all. We merely have the combined form ... superimposed upon some matter *m*' (Fine 1995, 338). Underpinning the analysis of mixture as a combination of bodies in *GC* 1.10 is a prior theory of what Fine calls 'formal composition'. For elemental mixtures in particular, this analysis involves what Fine calls 'hylomorphic leveling', the view that the level of predicative and hylomorphic complexity of elemental mixtures is the same as that of the elements. On the assumption of a more traditional conception of prime matter, this means that elemental mixtures consist of the mixture's intermediate character or 'form' directly predicated of prime matter rather than of the elements.

Does this account of mixture support, or at least leave room for, the robust presence of the ingredients? Fine puts a great deal of weight on Aristotle's characterization of intermediate qualities as 'compounds' (σύνθετα) of the relevant contraries, which he suggests is not 'merely a fanciful way of talking about qualitative difference' but rather indicates that 'the contraries are basic; the intermediates are literally composed of them; and the qualitative differences in the intermediates will simply consist in a quantitative difference in the contraries from which they are composed ([*Metaph.* 10.7,] 1057b27–9)' (308). It is true that the relevant contraries are prior to the intermediates, and the latter in some sense 'out of' the former, so Aristotle is not talking about mere qualitative difference—or mere MODIFICATION. We might say that, in this limited sense, the colors black and white, not qualities similar or parts of them, exist 'underneath' the intermediate quality of red. Similarly, we might say that, in this limited sense, the full natures of the four elements exist 'underneath' the intermediate character of flesh, not natures similar or even partially identical to them. But this may be all that Aristotle means here by the term σύνθετον. In fact, Aristotle himself seems at the end of *Metaph.* 10.7 to qualify his use of that term, saying that the intermediate quality is 'somehow a compound' (σύνθετόν πως) of the relevant contraries (1057b27–9). It is not clear that one can speak 'literally' of compounds of properties in this way.<sup>36</sup>

While the above disagreement might be partly a verbal one, the fact remains that, although mixtures are out of their ingredients in a sense that is closely connected to the way that intermediate qualities are out of contrary ones, and

36 I cannot locate the evidence for robustness that Fine seems to find in *De Sensu* 3 (1995, 308). In fact, as Laura Castelli pointed out to me, while *Metaph.* 10.7 consistently explains qualitative intermediacy in terms of contrary poles, other texts, such as, notably, *Metaph.* 10.4, 1055a33–b29 and *De Sensu* 3 439b14–19 and 4, 442a25–7, present contrariety as involving a privation and a positive feature, which are more difficult to understand as forming a 'literal' compound in the sense Fine is after.



not in the sense in which one element is out of another, it is a quite substantial further step to infer that the ingredients are robustly present in a mixture, so as to secure the twin desiderata of satisfying UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE OF AN INGREDIENT-KIND and ensuring that mixture is not a case of generation.<sup>37</sup> One reason for doubt about this further step is *Metaph.* 10.7's apparent generality, along with the wide range of cases to which Aristotle actually applies the model of qualitative intermediacy as 'formal composition'. Another is that, to the question whether and to what extent the ingredients persist as perceptible *subjects* in the mixture, it is hard to imagine a clearer negative answer than that provided by the formal composition model. And this means that mixing qualifies as a case of generation, according to the criterion of GC 1.4.

Let us now turn to the question of what TRACKING might require, in conjunction with a conception of robust presence compatible with full uniformity. One might initially worry that TRACKING cannot be satisfied if the mixture is robustly all of its ingredients uniformly and throughout. One might suppose, in particular, that it must be possible to distinguish the portions which are robustly one ingredient from those which are robustly another. But this is too hasty, as was already appreciated by the Stoics, in holding that a blend ( $\chi\rho\alpha\sigma\iota\varsigma$ ) is a co-location of bodies existing actually, so that it is all but guaranteed that the dissolution of the blend is a *numerical* recovery of the ingredients. Co-location is no threat to the possibility of tracking the spatio-temporal path of the ingredients, even if their spatio-temporal paths are not always distinct. To be sure, one might raise additional concerns, for example, about two actually or robustly existing ingredients being in the same place,<sup>38</sup> or about individual ingredients continuing to persist while changing their matter or the amount of matter they occupy.

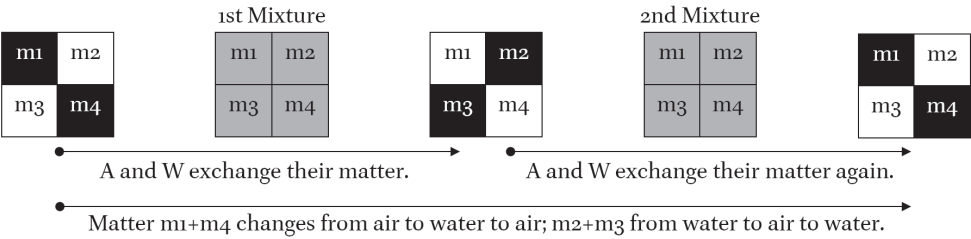
At any rate, Fine combines his fully uniform conception of mixtures with an account of numerical recovery of the ingredients from any part of the mixture. Consider the case in which some air A and water W form a mixture that is robustly both air and water throughout. According to Fine, the mixture is, in capacity, the *original* air and water, A and W, throughout. This means that in

37 When arguing for the robust presence of the ingredients in a mixture, Fine characterizes the potentially existing ingredients as subjects of a capacity to be separated out (see n. 26 above) and appeals to the rubric of 'unseparated' and 'latent' existence—a rubric that serves the proponent of non-uniform, subject-like presence equally well if not better.

38 See Alexander, *De Mixtione* 6 for this concern about the Stoic view. Betegh *forthcoming* suggests that Alexander rejects Stoic co-location of bodies in *De Mixtione* 1 on the (Aristotelian) grounds that bodies are individuated by their surfaces, which is closer to the worry about spatio-temporal coincidence raised just above. And, on Aristotle's views regarding the co-location of bodies, see Pfeiffer 2016.

the formation of the mixture, A and W both come to occupy the same matter, albeit as merely potentially present. As is reasonable if the whole mixture is, in capacity, A and W throughout, when the mixture is subsequently dissolved, A and W, and not just any air and water, will emerge from it, each becoming concentrated into a distinct portion of matter as it becomes fully actual again. And this seems to be the case no matter which portions of the mixture become air and which become water. A more restrictive view, on which numerical recovery also requires retention of the same matter, is typically preferred by those who endorse a non-uniform robust presence of the ingredients. But this more restrictive view is also compatible with the full uniformity of mixtures as I have been using the term. The mixture would still be uniformly robustly e.g. *air* throughout (and uniform in its intrinsic qualitative character), but only those portions of the mixture constituted by A's original matter would be, in capacity, A.

While both the less restrictive and more restrictive views of numerical recoverability described in the last paragraph are consistent with the full uniformity that is (in my view correctly) championed by Fine, there is some reason to think that Aristotle does not hold the less restrictive view. Suppose that air A and water W form a mixture which is then dissolved, and that the resulting air and water undergo the same process. Suppose further that in each mixing and dissolution, there is an exchange of matter, so that after two mixings and dissolutions the resulting air and water have the matter that was originally air and the matter that was originally water respectively. See the diagram below, in which the black bits are air and the white bits water. Now, according to Fine's less restrictive account, A and W, and not just any air and water, should emerge at the end of the entire process. However, the original matter of A ( $m_1+m_4$  in the diagram) has changed from being air to being water and back again to being air—just the kind of reversed elemental transformation, it seems, that cannot yield numerically the same air with which one started, according to *GC* 2.11, 338b17–18, our one ‘fixed point’ regarding the numerical persistence of element-ingredients.





However, the proponent of the less restrictive view can maintain that in this case the original air has 'moved' from one portion of matter to another and back again, while in that of *GC* 2.11 the original air did not move to a neighboring parcel of matter, having been instead destroyed—as is appropriate to a context discussing genuine elemental transformation. To assume that the case described above is parallel to that of *GC* 2.11 is to beg the question against the less restrictive view. Still, it must be said that Aristotle simply does not show any awareness of the possibility of some individual portion of air 'moving aside' into different matter, thereby making way for water to take up residence in its original matter.<sup>39</sup>

On the other side, if Aristotle holds the more restrictive view that numerical recovery requires retention of the same matter, then, independently of whether robustness is understood in terms of a subject-like presence, there is some reason to think that, in the chapters on mixture, he is not positing numerical recoverability at all. For one thing, he never points to a discrepancy between the uniform features of a mixture and the feature of being potentially the ingredients. And when he does consider from which portions of the mixture the ingredients are (in some sense) recoverable, his answer is clearly: from any portion, like any portion of wax can take on different shapes (2.7, 334a31–b2). The wax example itself is difficult to read in terms of numerical recoverability; and insofar as the passage stresses recoverability from any portion, Aristotle cannot, at least here, have in mind a conception of numerical recovery that requires retention of the same matter. Finally, if it requires retention of the same matter, numerical recovery will be difficult if not impossible to observe or verify, and, if mixtures are fully uniform, an exceedingly rare occurrence.

## 7      **Reconsidering Numerical Recoverability and the Need to Distinguish Mixture from Generation**

Let us briefly review the results of the previous section. We saw that the text of Aristotle's response to the *aporia* is reasonably, but not inevitably, read in terms of STRATEGY B, on which Aristotle posits the numerical recoverability

39      Alternatively, one might distinguish between what it is whose identity through time is at issue in the two cases (for which I don't see any textual basis). Fine, it seems, would reject the possibility of individuating portions of matter independently of their form (1995, 112–14). But having numerical recoverability depend on the inability to individuate portions of matter might exacerbate some of the concerns to be raised in the following section.

of the ingredients as a way of ensuring that mixing is not a case of generation; by contrast, the text makes does not seem to mention or directly characterize the robust existence of the ingredients (STRATEGY A). We considered two directions for making sense of the robust presence of the ingredients as involving (UNDERNEATH) the presence below the surface, in some sense, of the full natures of the ingredients. The more natural understanding grounds robustness in the non-uniform presence, as quasi-subjects, of the ingredients, but is difficult to square both with Aristotle's emphasis on uniformity and mutual affection as essential to mixture, and with *Metaph.* 10.7's 'formal composition' model of qualitative intermediacy, applied to color in *De Sensu* 3. On the other side, it is doubtful that an account of mixtures as fully uniform, as formed through mutual affection, and in conformity with the formal composition model leaves room for robustness, especially in a way that respects GC 1.4's distinction between generation and alteration. Regarding TRACKING, there is some reason for concern about Fine's less restrictive account of numerical recovery, which takes full advantage of the formal composition model, but also about whether Aristotle should be read to assert numerical recoverability in a more restrictive sense. Finally, while the text can reasonably be read as *asserting* numerical recoverability, neither GC 1.10 nor GC 2.7 says anything about the conditions for numerical recovery or how they might be fulfilled; even the verdict about elemental transformation from GC 2.11 appears in a disconnected context. Perhaps most troubling is that Aristotle shows no interest the myriad difficulties with making sense of how the ingredients might be numerically recoverable that we have encountered in this brief survey. All this gives us good reason to question whether his response to the *aporia* is meant to depend on the numerical recoverability of the ingredients. The above survey, of course, can do justice neither to the variety of accounts of robustness in the literature since Philoponus, nor to work on related issues, such as the individuation of matter.

I would like to bring out one more aspect of the demand for numerical recoverability, starting with Fine's account of robust presence. Suppose that an opponent were to agree with Fine's Aristotle that mixtures are fully uniform, without any subject-like presence of the ingredients. The opponent might still deny that numerical recoverability is possible, for example, on the grounds that full uniformity does not allow for the sense of robust existence needed to ground UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE OF AN INGREDIENT-KIND. Would it then be reasonable for the opponent to question or reject the account of mixture, on the grounds that ingredients of a mixture must be numerically recoverable? I believe that the answer is clearly 'no'. Even a view that ties numerical recoverability to the (as I see it, un-Aristotelian) subject-like presence of

the ingredients below the level of uniform appearance involves the controversial and theory-laden view that such a presence of the ingredient-kinds is sufficient to satisfy UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE OF AN INGREDIENT-KIND. But UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE OF AN INGREDIENT-KIND is not automatic, as it is for those views—whether atomist, Empedoclean, or Stoic—on which the ingredients remain actually present. Similar worries might be raised about certain understandings of the TRACKING condition.<sup>40</sup> Thus, although I have not shown that Aristotle rejected numerical recoverability for mixtures, I find it very unlikely that he should take it for granted as a primitive constraint on a correct account of mixture; nor is it a matter of observation; nor, finally, can Aristotle simply expect the reader to tie it to specific constraints on the workings of mixture, since such connections are nowhere addressed in the *GC*. And so the status of the alleged requirement of numerical recoverability remains very much unclear.

Our main reason, as interpreters, for invoking numerical recoverability (STRATEGY B) was that it seemed the best way of having Aristotle's text speak to the demand that mixture not be a case of generation, and specifically, that it lie between generation and alteration as a *sui generis* type of process. But would numerical recoverability even ensure that mixture is not a case of generation? Put another way, have we, in effect, introduced two forms of robustness, a weaker one required for numerical recoverability and a stronger one required by the desideratum that mixing not be a case of generation? This issue has been obscured by commentators' misplaced focus on elemental transformation as a comparison case, which Aristotle conveniently tells us does not exhibit numerical recoverability. But things are less clear in a case of 'upward' generation, that of a product whose complexity is greater than of its starting point. And this is an important comparison case, since mixtures too are of higher complexity than, and in some sense 'out of', their ingredients.<sup>41</sup> In a case of upward generation, can the starting point be turned into a higher-level substance in which it enjoys potential existence (again, think of the wood

40 In particular, an opponent might insist, against Fine's Aristotle, that numerical recovery requires retention of the same matter, but this would not be a good reason to reject the account of the formation and constitution of mixtures. The worries raised here concern whether it is *in principle possible* for mixtures, on one or another conception, to satisfy the conditions of numerical recovery (i.e. UNINTERRUPTED EXISTENCE and TRACKING), on one or another conception. It is another question on what grounds one can determine that numerical recovery has in fact occurred in a particular case, given that it is in principle possible, and these grounds will differ considerably according to the different conceptions of mixture and of the conditions of numerical recovery.

41 I am grateful to Christian Pfeiffer and Lara Trivellizzi for pushing me to develop this contrast between mixture and elemental transformation.

of a box or the flesh of an organism), and then emerge unscathed when the higher-level substance is destroyed? This is a difficult question both because Aristotle's examples, even in quite sophisticated contexts, are often not genuine cases of generation and because the relation between the pre-existing matter of a living organism and what survives its decay is a difficult and still controversial issue.<sup>42</sup> But the question is whether it is *in principle* possible for a numerically identical starting point to emerge from a substance that is generated from and somehow composed out of it.<sup>43</sup> I am inclined to think that it is not. However, one may reasonably ask: if this is possible in the case of fully uniform mixtures, then why is it not in principle possible in the case of upward substantial generation, especially if the generated substance is not uniform, but contains the pre-existent matter in something like the way that an animal contains bone? Of course, given Aristotle's denial of numerical recoverability in the case of elemental transformation, this possibility presupposes that the starting point is somehow present in the higher-level substance in a way in which earth is not present in water. But the two cases are different, in that the one is an upward generation to a higher-level substance that is in some sense composed out of the starting point, while the other is between substances at the same level that exhibit contrariety to one another.

There are also reasons for thinking that Aristotle does not and should not allow for a *sui generis* kind of process between generation and alteration. He nowhere mentions mixture within a list of types of change, alongside generation, alteration, growth and locomotion. And he should not because, if we apply the criterion of GC 1.4, a borderline case between generation and alteration seems to involve something like the first view of UNDERNEATH considered above, according to which the ingredients persist as subjects to a certain degree. And this view puts obvious strain on his metaphysical system: a mixture turns out to be something between a substance-accident compound and a matter-form compound, and so its underlying component (the ingredients) turns out to be something between a substance and substantial matter, its predicative component something between a quality and a substantial form. Even the fully uniform mixtures of the 'formal composition' approach, if

42 Recent contributions include Frey 2015 and Carraro 2017.

43 The new substance cannot contain as constituents any other actual substance. But the view of mixtures in question allows that some form of merely potential existence is compatible with numerical recovery. Another option might be that the initial substance survives within the mixture actually, but not as a substance; for example, it might survive as a quality or as a determinable universal feature, yet still emerge as a particular substance, the same one, when the new substance is destroyed. For a suggestion along these lines about the survival of pre-existent matter within a substance (but not necessarily its numerical recoverability from that substance) see Gill 1989, ch. 7 along with *Metaph.* 9.7.

formed through a process lying between alteration and generation, will be subject to the last concern: they will be e.g. compounds of prime matter together with a form that is not quite substantial, but also not quite non-substantial.

The alleged requirement that mixture not be a case of generation, given that it is also not alteration, is thus in certain respects similar to that of numerical recoverability. It is potentially problematic in fairly immediate ways, but Aristotle shows no particular interest in anticipating challenges, or even in spelling out just how the requirement is to be met. The two alleged requirements are similar in another way as well; for whether mixture is a case of generation turns out, on many interpretations of the workings of mixture, to be neither automatic nor empirically observable, but rather a theory-laden question. This is especially so on the conception of Aristotelian mixtures I endorse: as fully uniform and formed through genuine mutual affection that reaches down to the ingredient-natures. Suppose that Aristotle does think that mixing, so conceived, does not qualify as a generation. Still, if one were to take issue with this classification claim, this would hardly furnish grounds for dismissing the account of mixture. We might well wonder, as we did for numerical recoverability, what the source of the alleged requirement that mixture not be a case of generation is and how it can have the basic and unassailable status often ascribed to it.

## 8 The *Aporia* and Its Aim Again

Let us then step back from the challenges of making metaphysical sense of mixture as a *sui generis* process between generation and alteration, in order to reconsider whether Aristotle's text really does set such a requirement. Though Aristotle asserts, in his own voice, that mixture clearly differs from generation and destruction and that this difference should resolve the *aporia*, certain initial questions, briefly noted earlier, confront us when trying to understand how the *aporia* and Aristotle's response might be taken to concern this difference. The *aporia* demands that the ingredients not persist 'unaltered' and Aristotle's response states that they do not persist 'in *energeia*' or 'without qualification', from which it follows immediately that mixing is not an alteration proper of the ingredients; yet more explicitly, the *aporia* demands, and Aristotle's response states, that mixing not a destruction of the ingredients. By contrast, there is no obvious textual indication in the statement or resolution of the *aporia* that generation is even at issue. Accordingly, Aristotle's response does not *unambiguously* imply that mixture is not a case of generation, since it might be read as claiming that mixture is 'in capacity' the ingredients in the sense that it can be turned into the kinds of ingredients that went into it—perhaps in the

original ratio. Almost reflexively, one wants to appeal to *GC* 1.3's dictum that every generation is a destruction and vice versa. But this correlation between generation and destruction is a double-edged sword: instead of ensuring that mixing is not generation, it might lead us to doubt that Aristotle has really distinguished mixing from destruction.<sup>44</sup> And in fact, the context of *GC* 1.3–4 is not immediately helpful: the in-capacity existence of the ingredients does not seem to drive a wedge between mixing and generation according to the criterion of *GC* 1.4—quite the contrary—because what exists potentially is in itself not a subject for anything, as *GC* 1.3 reminds us (317b19–33); furthermore, the reasoning leading up to *GC* 1.3's dictum also posits that generation proceeds from the potential existence of the product, which might suggest, by considerations of symmetry, that the potential existence of the starting point is compatible with its having been destroyed. And quite apart from this more theoretical context, elemental transformation is a case of both generation and destruction that involves the potential existence of the starting point after the fact.

Two questions need to be answered. How should the *aporia* and Aristotle's response be taken to concern the claim that mixing is not generation? And how is the potential presence of the ingredients meant to rule out their destruction? Now, given that the potential presence of the ingredients is explicitly and undeniably meant to furnish an alternative to their destruction, the second question will be welcomed by most interpreters as capturing an independent motivation for robust presence. Is there an alternative?

It may help to consider the provenance of the *aporia*. Aristotle leaves no doubt that it is not his own. He attributes it to an unspecified group: 'It is impossible for one thing to be mixed with another, according to what some say (καθάπερ λέγουσί τινες)'. In particular, the 'they say' (φασί) at 327b2 and the infinitives indicating indirect speech throughout the passage make clear that the entire argument is being reported; he is not, e.g., himself deriving unpalatable consequences from an opponent's position. This alone gives us good reason to hesitate about giving it the kind of weight it has sometimes been given, namely, as a constraint that determines the workings of mixture in great detail.<sup>45</sup> Whose *aporia* is it? Surprisingly, few scholars have addressed

44 Williams 1981, 144 thus suggests that we must look elsewhere for an explanation of why mixing does not destroy the ingredients, but I don't see any indication of such an explanation in the passages he cites: *GC* 1.10, 328a28–31; 2.6, 333a28, 32; 2.7, 334b8–30.

45 In this connection, see Fine's repeated appeals to the need to satisfy the 'skeptical' about mixture—which he sees as the 'primary requirement on any adequate account of mixture' (1995, 290)—in increasingly abstruse and intricate discussions, such as on p. 339, quoted in n. 25 above.



the question, and the few proposed answers are rarely taken into account. It has been characterized as Megarian but drawing on Zenonian roots, as coming from Eleatic-influenced early sophists, and as Democritean.<sup>46</sup> Though it is difficult to identify the source of the *aporia* with confidence, the hypothesis of Eleatic origin or influence is reasonable. For the *aporia* hinges on an exclusive and exhaustive dichotomy between the ingredients continuing to be and their ceasing to be; this seems to involve a dichotomy between being and not-being that, to the Aristotelian, rests on a conception of being that is too absolute, without sufficient qualification, etc. It is not the altogether monolithic conception of being that Aristotle attacks in *Phys.* 1.2–3, but one which at least fails to make room for the ingredients being present in capacity as a third option; in this respect it is like the more explicitly Eleatic puzzle at *GC* 1.3.

How then can the in-capacity existence of the ingredients within the mixture constitute an alternative to destruction, given that destruction seems to allow for the in-capacity existence of the starting point after the fact? Instead of strengthening the sense in which the ingredients are said to exist in capacity, we may take a cue from the hypothesis of Eleatic influence and strengthen the relevant notion of destruction to 'utter destruction': something's utter destruction results in its 'utter' not-being, so that it does not even exist in capacity.<sup>47</sup> I propose, then, that the second horn of the *aporia* involves the utter destruction of the ingredients, and that this is the sort of destruction of the ingredients that Aristotle rejects in his response. An 'ordinary' in-capacity presence of the ingredient-kinds is sufficient to rule out their destruction in this sense. This understanding of the *aporia* and Aristotle's response involves an un-Aristotelian but by no means unusual use of the term 'destruction'. However, recall that—as the proponent of robust presence must agree—ἀλλοιοῦσθαι cannot have the standard Aristotelian sense that implies the actual persistence of a substance. In any case, we can certainly allow Aristotle to adopt the linguistic usage of the *aporia* in his response. The most important point for my interpretation, however, is that Aristotle is talking about utter destruction also

46 By Cherniss 1935 (141 n. 564), Sprague 1971 and Groisard 2016 (3–4) respectively. Groisard supports the hypothesis of Democritean origin by pointing out that the juxtaposition model discussed later in the chapter, which he takes to be atomist (for doubts see Cooper 2009, 165), involves the preservation of the starting points. However, the juxtaposition model would seem to be, for its proponents, a model of mixture (recall the usage of *GC* 1.6 that treats aggregation as a kind of μίξις), whereas the preservation of the ingredients is presented as a threat to mixture in the *aporia* under discussion. And, in any case, the thesis of indestructible atoms itself might well be motivated along Eleatic lines.

47 This implies that the ingredients are not immediately recoverable, according to the criterion at *Metaph.* 9.7, 1048b37–1049a18.

when he claims that the *aporia* is seeking how mixing differs from generation and destruction and the mixable from the generable and destructible, when he asserts in his own voice that these are real differences, and when he implies that getting clear about them is sufficient to resolve the *aporia*. He is adopting the linguistic usage of the *aporia* in trying to bring out its significance.

There is one rather straightforward indication of this additional departure from standard Aristotelian usage in the *aporia*—more straightforward than any indication of robust presence in Aristotle's resolution. The objection to the option that both ingredients are destroyed is that 'things that are *altogether* non-existent (τά γε ὅλως οὐκ ὄντα) have not been mixed' (327b6).<sup>48</sup> It would be strange for Aristotle to use this phrase to refer, among other things, to one element's being potentially another. Aristotle also characterizes the ingredients as 'not having been destroyed' (327b26), using the verb ἀπόλλυσθαι, which sometimes has a stronger connotation than φθείρεσθαι, suggesting that something is no longer attainable.

Such an understanding of destruction is also suggested by the passage immediately following the statement of the *aporia*, in which Aristotle deploys its two horns in order to restrict the sorts of items that are properly said to undergo mixture (GC 1.10, 328b10–17):

However, we do not say that the wood has been mixed with the fire, or that it is being mixed when burning, either with its own parts or with the fire, but rather that the fire is coming to be and it is being destroyed. And in the same way [we say] neither that the nutriment is being mixed with the body nor that it is by being mixed with the wax that the figure shapes the mass. And neither is the body able to be mixed with paleness, nor, in general, the affections and dispositions with the things; for they are seen to be preserved.

Aristotle here mentions three canonical types of change that are central to GC 1.1–5: generation and destruction (burning wood), growth (nutriment and body), and alteration proper (wax being shaped, the body becoming pale, things taking on affections or dispositions). And while alteration and growth involve the preservation of at least one starting point, thus falling prey to the first horn, the case of burning wood evidently involves the destruction of a starting point,

48 This observation is readily accommodated by STRATEGY B, which can hold that it concerns the presence of numerically the same ingredients. For according to STRATEGY B, Aristotelian destruction is incompatible with numerical recoverability. My point here is just that Aristotle does employ the notion of 'utter' non-existence.



wood. Aristotle might easily have chosen an example of reversible destruction of the kind closer to the concerns of the *GC*, such as a transformation of water to air; the occurrence and reversibility of such transformations was attested as something observable in Plato's *Timaeus* (49b7–c7, slightly corrected at 54b6–d3). The example of burning wood is a case that, pre-theoretically at least, will be understood as an irrevocable destruction; the wood has gone up in smoke.<sup>49</sup>

Even if we accept that 'destruction' in this context means utter destruction, so that his proposal represents a genuine alternative to what he calls destruction and a genuine third way between it and preservation in *energeia*, the first question remains: how does his proposal address the relation of mixing to generation, which plays no explicit role in the statement or resolution of the *aporia*? It is reasonable to think (following *GC* 1.3's dictum) that generation presupposes Aristotelian destruction, but generation does not similarly presuppose utter destruction, as the case of elemental transformation shows. We might still apply *GC* 1.3's dictum to utter destruction by positing a correspondingly narrow notion of 'sheer generation', which requires the utter destruction of the starting point (if there is a starting point, as there is for mixture). This view is amenable to my main strategy to the extent that, by denying that mixing is a case of sheer generation, Aristotle would not be denying that it is a case of Aristotelian generation. But it is not entirely satisfying. First, it would be somewhat strange for Aristotle to employ some narrow, perhaps Eleatic conception of generation even though the notion of generation does not figure in the *aporia* at all. Second, there is no indication, as there is for 'destruction', of any special usage, so that positing one becomes somewhat speculative.

Most importantly, Aristotle's text suggests that he has no need of the concept of 'sheer generation', and that he is careful not to presuppose that every 'generation' is a 'destruction'; he can here allow that his terminology runs afoul of *GC* 1.3's dictum. Aristotle claims that we would say, of the case of the burning wood, that 'the fire is coming to be and [the wood] is being destroyed' (327b13). Similarly, his claim that mixture differs from generation and destruction can be understood as the claim that mixture is not a case of both generation and (utter) destruction. Most notably, the related claim about the mixable differing from the generable and destructible seems precisely formulated so as *not* to allow the inference that mixture is not a case of generation: 'how the mixable [differs] from the generable and destructible' (τί τὸ μίχτον τοῦ γεννητοῦ καὶ φθαρτοῦ, 327b8–9). The lack of an article before 'destructible' (φθαρτοῦ) indicates that the implicit claim is that the mixable is not (thereby) something subject to *both* generation and destruction. We can thus understand Aristotle's

49 I owe this point to Lara Trivellizzi.

strategy as aiming to show how mixture is not a case of both generation and utter destruction; it is in this respect like the generation of fire from air or a box from wood, but not like the generation of fire from wood through burning. Aristotle's additional claim that the *aporia* is seeking the difference between the mixable and the generable and destructible suggests a slightly more specific point: if mixing generates a new substance, then the 'mixable' and 'generable' ingredients are not thereby utterly destroyed, and so do not undergo a process of generation that involves their own utter destruction.<sup>50</sup>

The interpretation proposed here has two simple but significant advantages. The first is that, as we saw, it easily explains how the *aporia* raises, and how Aristotle's response addresses, the question of how mixing differs from generation and destruction (and the mixable from the generable and destructible). If 'destruction' is understood as utter destruction, then the *aporia* clearly demands (with the threat that the ingredients will be 'altogether non-existent'), and Aristotle's resolution clearly posits (with the ingredients' in-capacity existence), that mixing is not a case of destruction, and *a fortiori*, not a case of both generation and destruction, i.e. generation through the ingredients' utter destruction. By contrast, it is unclear, I have argued, how the *aporia* demands, or Aristotle's resolution shows, that mixing is not an Aristotelian destruction of the ingredients, or that it is not a case of generation at all. I suspect that if we were to encounter Aristotle's statement and resolution of the *aporia* alone, without his additional remarks about the relation between mixing, generation and destruction, it would seem farfetched that Aristotle was invoking the claim that mixing is not a case of generation, or positing the robust presence of the ingredients. Rather than invest his response to the *aporia* with additional and at best unnecessary refinements, whose Aristotelian pedigree, usefulness, and/or plausibility is questionable, we should take the response as it appears, and adjust our expectation of what the *aporia* is after.

The second main advantage of this interpretation is that it easily explains why Aristotle finds himself entitled to assume without argument that the ingredients are not destroyed, and that mixture differs from generation and destruction. For these claims, if understood in terms of utter destruction, are no more controversial than the claim that the ingredient-kinds can be recovered—to which Aristotle helps himself without further ado.<sup>51</sup> By contrast, the plau-

50 Strictly, the claim implied at 327b8–9 allows that mixture involves something *other* than the ingredients ('the mixable') being generated into a new substance through its own destruction, but I take the earlier claim that mixture differs from generation and destruction to rule this out.

51 Of course, Aristotle's confidence about the recoverability of the ingredient-kinds has rightly baffled commentators; still, positing that mixture is not generation, especially if

sibility of the theory-laden claims that mixing is not a case of Aristotelian destruction and that it is not a case of generation at all remains controversial, even on many proposals about the workings of mixture that are meant to legitimate them.<sup>52</sup>

If Aristotle does not show that mixing is not a case of generation (or that it is not an Aristotelian destruction), then he will not here have provided a principled distinction between mixing and elemental transformation, which many commentators have treated as an interpretive desideratum. But this, I think, is no disadvantage to my reading. Of course, Aristotle can differentiate the two in several ways, for example: by pointing out that mixing involves mutual interaction leading to qualitative intermediacy (*GC* 1.10, 328a18–31; 2.7, 334b8–30), while elemental transformation is between strict contraries (2.4) and qualitatively intermediate bodies are not elements (2.3; 2.5, 332a21–6); or by specifying a distinctive sense in which elemental mixtures can be said to be the elements in capacity (2.7, 334b7–19). But without the need to explain why mixture is not a case of generation, there is no need for him to provide the resources to differentiate mixture from elemental transformation here. It bears repeating both that an explicit comparison to elemental transformation would be out of place in *GC* 1.10, since Aristotle's elemental theory has not yet been established within the *GC*, and that the case of elemental transformation is in certain respects not the most interesting comparison case, since its termini are at the same degree of complexity.

## 9 Mixtures between Elements and Living Bodies

I have argued that the main textual basis for the view that mixing is a *sui generis* process between generation and alteration does not in fact have this consequence; certain aspects of the text suggest rather that—within the constraints of that discussion—Aristotle is making room for the view that mixing is a case of generation. Moreover, both Aristotle's account of the formation of mixtures and his 'formal composition' model of qualitative intermediacy suggest that the ingredients do not enjoy a subject-like presence within the mixture. Consequently, elemental mixtures seem to exhibit the same degree of predicative complexity as the elements themselves and can equally be thought

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52 this requires numerical recoverability, would put him on considerably less secure ground. The other main premise is that the ingredients are not preserved in actuality. It could be supported by some partly observation-based arguments against the juxtaposition view (*GC* 2.7, 334a26–b2; *De Sensu* 3, 440a20–31).

of as perceptible bodies and subjects. It is hard to see how else they might fit into Aristotle's categorial scheme than as substances, in the less demanding sense appropriate to the *GC*.

The view that mixing is a case of generation is no doubt strange. It implies that seemingly minor qualitative affections constitute substantial changes. What is more, Aristotle does not offer any principle for limiting the ratios of elements or other homogenous stuffs that can form mixtures. But it can be pointed out that, while the *GC* claims only that the ingredients are in a very loose sense commensurate, *De Sensu* 6 argues that the number of intermediate perceptual qualities between a given pair of contraries is limited (445b3–446a20); this restriction may plausibly be taken to carry over to mixtures.<sup>53</sup> The corresponding account of the constitution of mixtures, as fully uniform with no subject-like presence of the ingredients, has the strange consequence that there is no intrinsic difference between the result of mixing and that of just one of the ingredients being qualitatively affected in the same way in which minute portions of it are affected when being mixed. However, elemental transformation too is a kind of qualitative affection, albeit a maximal one along the relevant contrariety or contraries. And Aristotle does in fact think that flesh, bone and marrow—at least those which are living tissues—are typically formed not through mixing, but through the exercise of active powers on blood.<sup>54</sup>

This brings us to an issue I have left aside up to now: that genuine flesh and bone (and so on)—flesh and bone in the most proper senses—are essentially characterized with reference to their functions within living organisms, as opposed to what are merely 'homonymously' (in name alone) flesh and bone, whose natures are fully explained by their constitution as elemental mixtures; on a standard understanding, this functional account of genuine flesh and bone implies that they are essentially ensouled and can exist only when properly integrated within living organisms.<sup>55</sup> If so, their formation cannot qualify as generation, but will rather be part of the generation, growth or maintenance of a living organism. Now, a conception of flesh and bone as essentially ensouled is largely absent from the *GC*—at least from the chapters on mixture;<sup>56</sup> accordingly, *GC* 1.10 treats claims about the nature of what is

53 See Frede 2004, 311 n. 51 and the discussion she cites in Fine 1995 on this issue.

54 This is suggested by *GC* 1.5's very schematic discussion. Aristotle is more explicit about the tissues of sentient organisms in his biological works (see Frey 2015, 1).

55 I remain neutral about this standard formulation. See Mirus 2001, Frey 2007 and Carraro 2017 for critical discussion of the precise sense in which animal tissues are essentially characterized with reference to their functions.

56 But see *GC* 1.5's distinction between flesh in the sense of form and in the sense of matter, and its suggestion that, because this distinction is clearer in the case of non-uniform

undergone by the ingredients as answers to the classification question about mixing. More importantly, given that in ordinary nutritive processes, flesh and bone are not produced by mixing, *GC* 1.10 and 2.7 can safely be taken to apply to flesh and bone in name alone, as well as to other inanimate mixtures.<sup>57</sup> And so the argument of this paper, which concerns the mixtures envisioned in those chapters, is not threatened by Aristotle's functional specification of living tissues. This does not mean that it is of no relevance for living tissues and the organisms containing them; after all, the relation between living tissues and their non-living, 'homonymous' counterparts is an intimate one. One immediate consequence is that the elements are no more strongly present in living tissues (or living organisms) than in their non-living counterparts.<sup>58</sup> And in general, while the functional specification of the essence of genuine flesh and bone poses a threat from 'above', as it were, to the idea that their formation is a kind of generation, my aim has been to defuse a threat from 'below', i.e. from the presence of the ingredients within mixtures. The independence of these two threats might lie behind Aristotle's claim that, if the process by which flesh is produced during growth were to occur in isolation from a living body, it would be a case of generation.<sup>59</sup>

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parts, such as a hand, we are less prone to think a hand survives after death than to think that flesh does. Though *GC* 1.5 does not explicitly draw on the homonymy principle, its parallels to *Meteor.* 4.12, which does seem to do invoke that principle, suggest that flesh in the sense of form is flesh understood according to its role in a living organism.

57 As also Frey 2007. On a similar limitation in *Meteorology* 4, see Lennox 2014.

58 This consequence is problematic for certain views on which the elements serve as persistent matter in the generation of living organisms, and it is also relevant for the role of elemental natures in the decay of living organisms. On both issues, see Whiting 1992.

59 See *GC* 1.5, 322a4–16. He compares the two cases to those of adding wood to an existing fire (growth) and creating a new fire, e.g. by rubbing sticks (generation). This passage does not directly bear on the classificatory question, since the relevant process is not mixing.

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## El uso metodológico de las metáforas lumínicas<sup>1</sup> en los fragmentos 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía* de Aristóteles

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**Resumen.** La tesis que intentaremos mostrar en este trabajo es que, al exponer su concepción acerca de la sabiduría en *Sobre la filosofía*, Aristóteles habría operado tomando como punto de partida el supuesto de que en el orden del conocimiento se debe proceder de “lo más conocido para nosotros” a “lo más conocido en sí”. Para ello, dividiremos el trabajo en dos secciones. En la primera, abordaremos de forma esquemática el uso de términos perceptuales en algunas de las obras del *corpus* (la *Física*, la *Metafísica* y el *Protréptico*). En la segunda parte, analizaremos los fragmentos 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía*, que son los estratos de la obra en donde este principio epistemológico aparecen más claramente.

**Palabras claves:** “más conocido en sí”; “más conocido para nosotros”; metáfora; Aristóteles; “procedimiento epistemológico”; “usos didácticos de las metáforas”.

### [en] The methodological use of light metaphors in Aristotle's *On Philosophy* fragments 8b and 8c

**Abstract.** In this thesis we will endeavor to demonstrate that, in exposing his conception about wisdom in *On philosophy*, Aristotle would have begun by taking as a starting point the assumption that the order of knowledge should go from “better known to us” to “better known in themselves”. For this, we will divide the work into two sections. In the first, we will approach in a schematic way the use of perceptual terms in some of the works of the *corpus* (*Physics*, *Metaphysics* and *Protrepticus*). In the second part, we will analyze fragments 8b and 8c of *On philosophy*, which are the strata of the work in which this epistemological principle appear more clearly.

**Keywords:** “better known to us”; “better known in themselves”; metaphor; Aristotle; “Epistemological procedure”; “didactic uses of metaphors”.

**Sumario:** 1. Los modos perceptuales de referirse a “lo más conocido en sí” o “más conocido por naturaleza” (γνωριμώτερον τῇ φύσει) y “lo más conocido para nosotros” (γνωριμώτερον ἡμῖν); 2. “lo más conocido en sí” y “lo más conocido para nosotros” en 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía*; 3. Conclusiones; 4. Referencias bibliográficas.

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<sup>1</sup> Con la expresión “metáforas lumínicas” nos referimos a que en estos fragmentos Aristóteles no se vale simplemente de metáforas para ilustrar sus concepciones, sino que apela a metáforas muy específicas, mediante las cuales equipará la luz con lo “más conocido en sí” y la falta de luz u oscuridad con “lo más conocido para nosotros”. Con esto, creemos, que el Estagirita emula la distinción entre “lo más cognoscible en sí” y “lo más cognoscible para nosotros” que será central en su epistemología.

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Al estudiar el pensamiento de Aristóteles, la mayor parte de los intérpretes se centra en el análisis de las obras esotéricas. Quizá por su carácter fragmentario, los trabajos sobre las obras exotéricas son escasos. De *Sobre la filosofía*, hay traducciones con estudios preliminares y notas, como, por ejemplo, la de Untersteiner (1963), la de Vallejo Campos (2005) y la de Zanatta (2013). En *La filosofía del “primo” Aristotele* (1967),<sup>3</sup> Berti le dedica un capítulo completo, en el cual analiza la noción de sabiduría y la naturaleza de los principios. En *Recherches sur le premier Aristote* (1981), trayendo a colación cuestiones similares, Dumoulin escribió un extenso capítulo dedicado a *Sobre la filosofía*, aunque también hace remisión a esta obra en otras secciones del mismo libro.<sup>4</sup> En general, el estudio de este escrito se ha centrado en los fragmentos en los cuales Aristóteles habría presentado tesis teológicas y cosmológicas.<sup>5</sup> No obstante, aún en este caso, el número de estos trabajos es reducido, en comparación con los estudios que versan sobre estas mismas cuestiones en otras obras, como, por ejemplo, la *Física*, *Sobre el cielo* y la *Metafísica*.

El análisis de los procedimientos metodológicos, así como de los supuestos epistemológicos, tan estudiados en relación con los tratados esotéricos, ha sido prácticamente relegado en relación con esta obra.<sup>6</sup> En cuanto al primer aspecto, los procedimientos metodológicos, en trabajos anteriores, advertimos que el aparente carácter doxográfico de lo que habrían sido los dos primeros libros de *Sobre la filosofía* no obedece sólo al intento de recapitular las concepciones de los predecesores, sino a la implementación del método dialéctico, basado en los *éndoxa* u opiniones de los antecesores.

En esta instancia, nos interesa volver sobre esta obra, pero para centrarnos en el análisis de algunos de los supuestos gnoseológicos a partir los cuales Aristóteles habría formulado las tesis allí presentadas.<sup>7</sup> Creemos que, al exponer su concepción acerca de la sabiduría en esta obra, Aristóteles habría tomado como punto de partida el supuesto de que en el orden del conocimiento se debe proceder de “lo más conocido para nosotros” (γνωριμώτερον ἡμῖν) a “lo más conocido en sí” o “lo más conocido por naturaleza” (γνωριμώτερον τῇ φύσει). Si bien, en los fragmentos conservados esta tesis no aparece explícitamente formulada, algunos de los comentaristas antiguos, entre ellos Asclepio y Filópono, por cuyo medio hemos podido “recuperar” parte de este escrito, le adjudican a Aristóteles una serie de metáforas lumínicas que, a nuestro modo de entender, la reproduce.

A los efectos de demostrar esta hipótesis, dividiremos el trabajo en dos secciones. En la primera, nos centraremos en la distinción entre “lo más conocido en sí”, y “lo más conocido para nosotros”. Si bien deberemos hacer un análisis esquemático de

<sup>3</sup> En 1971 se lanzó una nueva edición revisada y aumentada, que es la que en rigor estamos citando en este trabajo.

<sup>4</sup> Este autor realiza, además, un contrapunto con el *Timeo* de Platón mediante el cual intentará demostrar que muchas de las tesis que habrían sido presentadas en *Sobre la filosofía*, como, por ejemplo, la existencia “una divinidad inmaterial, de un dios invisible autor de este mundo visible” (Dumoulin (1981), pp. 42) tienen su precedente en dicho texto platónico.

<sup>5</sup> Entre estos estudiosos cabe mencionar a Aubenque (2008), pp. 284-300; Berti (1997), pp. 279-319; Chroust (1975), pp. 553-569; (197), pp. 500- 512; Düring (2000), p. 297; Dumoulin (1981), pp. 41-75; Jaeger (1993), pp. 162 y ss.

<sup>6</sup> En su ensayo introductorio a *Sobre la filosofía*, Zanatta (2008, pp. 447-448,) realiza un escueto análisis de la utilización de la dialéctica en esta obra, así como del uso de los *éndoxa*.

<sup>7</sup> En este trabajo retomamos y profundizamos algunas líneas interpretativas que comenzamos a desarrollar en un trabajo anterior, que se centra en la concepción de la sabiduría en *Sobre la filosofía*.

esta distinción, al proceder de este modo, no pretendemos hacer una sistematización exhaustiva,<sup>8</sup> sino establecer cómo Aristóteles se vale de términos perceptuales para dar cuenta de ella. Nuestro objetivo es mostrar que el uso de las metáforas lumínicas para expresar esta distinción en *Sobre la filosofía* tiene precedentes en otras obras que integran el *corpus*. Para ello, nos centraremos en el análisis de algunos pasajes de la *Física*, la *Ética Eudemia*, la *Metafísica* y el *Protréptico*.

En la segunda parte, examinaremos los fragmentos 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía*, pues es en estos estratos de la obra donde creemos que Aristóteles realizar la distinción entre “lo más conocido en sí” y “lo más conocido para nosotros”, empleando metáforas lumínicas. En relación con esto, queremos establecer cómo Aristóteles habría implementado en esta obra este principio epistemológico para dar cuenta del conocimiento de los primeros principios y de su concepción de la sabiduría.

## 1. Los modos perceptuales de referirse a “lo más conocido en sí” o “más conocido por naturaleza” (γνωριμώτερον τῇ φύσει) y “lo más conocido para nosotros” (γνωριμώτερον ἡμῖν)

Una de las cuestiones recurrentes en la obra de Aristóteles es la indagación sobre cómo podemos acceder al conocimiento. En este sentido, es clave la distinción que Aristóteles realiza entre lo que es “más cognoscible para nosotros” y “lo más cognoscible en sí”. “Lo más cognoscible para nosotros” es aquello que cae bajo los sentidos o aquello con lo cual nos enfrentamos en el trato diario con las cosas.<sup>9</sup> El referente de “lo más cognoscible en sí” son los primeros principios y causas, cuya naturaleza es inteligible y, por este motivo, lo más alejado de los sentidos.<sup>10</sup> Para Aristóteles, llegamos a tener verdadero conocimiento cuando hay una plena identificación entre ambas cosas y esto sucede cuando obtenemos el conocimiento de lo más cognoscible en sí.<sup>11</sup> Lo que nos interesa de esta distinción es que, en algunos contextos, para sistematizarla Aristóteles recurre al uso de expresiones perceptuales. En el primer libro de la *Física*, sostiene:

El procedimiento natural es partir de las cosas más cognoscibles (ἐκ τῶν γνωριμωτέρων) y claras (σαφέστερων) para nosotros (ἡμῖν) y remontarnos a las más claras (σαφέστερα) y cognoscibles (γνωριμώτερα) por naturaleza (τῇ φύσει). En efecto, no es lo mismo ‘cognoscible para nosotros’ y ‘cognoscible en sentido absoluto’. Precisamente por eso es forzoso proceder de este modo: partir de las cosas menos claras (ἐκ τῶν ἀσαφέστερων) por naturaleza (τῇ φύσει) pero más claras (σαφέστερων) para nosotros (ἡμῖν) y remontarnos a las cosas más claras (τὰ σαφέστερα) y cognoscibles (γνωριμώτερα) por naturaleza (τῇ φύσει).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Para análisis exhaustivo de esta distinción, véase Aubenque (2008), pp. 49-64; Leshner (2010), pp. 143-156; Lugarini (1972), pp. 91-97.

<sup>9</sup> *Tópicos* VI 4, 141b10-11. Si bien hemos trabajado con las ediciones griegas, en el caso de *Tópicos* hemos consultado también la traducción de Candel Sanmartín.

<sup>10</sup> *Tópicos* VI, 141b6-10.

<sup>11</sup> *Tópicos* VI 4, 142a 9- 12.

<sup>12</sup> *Física* I 1, 184a 16- 22. trad. Boeri.

En este pasaje, Aristóteles no distingue simplemente entre “lo más cognoscible en sí” o “lo más cognoscible por naturaleza” (γνωριμώτερον τῇ φύσει) y “lo más cognoscible para nosotros” (γνωριμώτερον ἡμῖν)<sup>13</sup> sino también entre “lo más claro en sí” y “lo más claro para nosotros”. Esta distinción está relacionada con el hecho de que, para Aristóteles, el conocimiento en sentido estricto presupone el descubrimiento de los principios.<sup>14</sup> Desde su perspectiva, solo podemos dar cuenta de las cosas cuando conocemos sus principios, razón por la cual lo que realmente otorga claridad a las cosas es la adquisición de estos principios.<sup>15</sup> Sin embargo, pese a ser lo más manifiesto, debido a que estos no son de carácter sensible, para nosotros son lo más oscuro.<sup>16</sup>

Lo que se desprende de este pasaje es que lo más claro y cognoscible recibe este calificativo desde la perspectiva desde la cual se lo tome. Los principios de las cosas son lo más claro porque son lo que permite tener conocimiento en sentido estricto. Sin embargo, en función de su naturaleza, son lo más distante para nosotros, razón por la cual son lo más difícil de conocer y, por ende, lo más oscuro.<sup>17</sup> Lo inverso sucede con lo sensible: la familiaridad que tenemos con lo sensible hace que sea lo más claro para nosotros, pero en función de que no da cuenta de lo que las cosas son, esto es, dado que encubre la verdadera naturaleza de las cosas, oscurece su conocimiento, siendo, por este motivo, lo menos claro y manifiesto en sí.

Según Leshner,<sup>18</sup> al afirmar que debemos ir de “lo más conocido para nosotros” a “lo más conocido en sí”, Aristóteles está planteando la existencia de un movimiento del alma hacia un discurso definitivo que comienza desde las cosas que son oscuras,<sup>19</sup> pero más evidentes para nosotros, y progresa hacia lo que es claro o más conocido. En este sentido, coincidimos con Lugarini<sup>20</sup> en cuanto a que la distinción ontológica entre lo más claro para nosotros y lo más claro en sí es el fundamento de la distinción

<sup>13</sup> *Metafísica* VII 3, 1029a 1-4. En el caso de la *Metafísica* hemos seguido la traducción de Calvo Martínez.

<sup>14</sup> *Física* I 1, 184a10 ss.

<sup>15</sup> *Física* I 1, 184a10-14.

<sup>16</sup> Tal como lo indica Boeri (2010), p.63, en este pasaje, Aristóteles está empleando dos sentidos de anterioridad. Solo de este modo se entiende, sin caer en contradicción, que lo más oscuro sea también lo más evidente para nosotros. Las características sensibles de las cosas son lo más oscuro, pues por medio de ellas no podemos alcanzar los principios explicativos de las cosas (Boeri (2010), p.63). Sin embargo, son lo más manifiesto para nosotros, ya que son objeto de la percepción sensible, aquello a lo que primero accedemos, cuando intentamos conocerlas. En esta instancia, se trata de una anterioridad cronológica. (*Metafísica* V 11, 1018b15-20). Los principios y causas son primeros en el orden ontológico y epistemológico (*Física* I 1, 184a10-16), pues son causa del ser de las cosas respecto de las cuales son principios, pero también son aquello sin lo cual estas no se podrían conocer (*Metafísica* V 11, 1018 b: “en otro sentido, lo que es anterior en cuanto al conocimiento (τῇ γνώσει) se considera, además, anterior absolutamente ἀπλῶς πρότερον”). Trad. Calvo Martínez). Resulta clave la distinción que Aristóteles hace en *Metafísica* V 11, 1018b, 30 -31, entre lo que es anterior según la definición (*lógos*) y lo que es anterior según la sensación (*aísthesis*). El uso de *lógos* es relevante por la ambigüedad semántica que tiene. Retomando a Lanza- Vegetti (1971), p. 1281, podemos decir que, para Aristóteles, *lógos* puede tener el sentido de *eídos* o de *horismós*, razón por la cual lo que es anterior según el *lógos* es anterior según la esencia y la definición. Por este motivo, tiene una prioridad ontológica y epistemológica y se contrapone a lo que es anterior según la sensación, que es lo que es primero para nosotros.

<sup>17</sup> Lugarini (1972, p. 91) señala que existen diferentes grados de “claridad”. El grado más elevado remite a lo que es constitutivamente claro, esto es, a aquello cuya manifestación constituye “una verdad”. El segundo grado de claridad está relacionado con aquello que se manifiesta en la forma de “fenómeno”. La distinción epistemológica entre “lo más cognoscible en sí” y “lo más cognoscible para nosotros” tiene sus raíces aquí.

<sup>18</sup> Leshner (2010), p. 152.

<sup>19</sup> Con esto, suponemos que lo que quiere indicar Leshner no es que las cosas sean en sí mismas oscuras, sino que lo que es “oscuro” es la captación que tenemos de ellas.

<sup>20</sup> Lugarini (1972), p. 91.

gnoseológica entre lo más cognoscible para nosotros y lo más cognoscible en sí. Desde la perspectiva de este autor, que la cosa sea clara en sí misma es la precondition de su cognoscibilidad. El discernimiento de este tipo de cosas constituye conocimiento en sentido estricto, mientras que el de las cosas que son claras para nosotros constituye un conocimiento “pre- epistémico del saber mismo”.<sup>21</sup>

En *Ética Eudemia* I 6, 1216b 30-35 encontramos una distinción parecida:

Todo hombre, pues, tiene algo propio en relación con la verdad (τι πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν), y partiendo de esto, debemos aportar alguna especie de prueba sobre estas materias. Partiendo, pues, de juicios verdaderos, pero no claros (ἐκ γὰρ τῶν ἀληθῶς μὲν λεγομένων οὐ σαφῶς), y avanzando, llegaremos a otros claros(σαφῶς), si reemplazamos lo que se dice habitualmente de manera confusa por otras más conocidas (trad. Pallí Bonet modificada).

Con Woods,<sup>22</sup> creemos que en el pasaje citado de la *Ética Eudemia*, al hablar de la poca claridad de las opiniones existentes, Aristóteles no solo estaba aludiendo a su oscuridad, sino también a su falta de exactitud (*akribeia*). Sobre esta base, este autor sostiene que, al tomar como punto de partida esas opiniones, Aristóteles estaría presuponiendo la distinción entre “lo más inteligible en sí” y “lo más inteligible para nosotros”, que se puede rastrear en pasajes de otras obras, como, por ejemplo, *Analíticos posteriores*,<sup>23</sup> y la *Física*.<sup>24</sup>

En el pasaje citado de la *Ética Eudemia*, al decir que todos los hombres dicen algo correcto en relación con la verdad, Aristóteles está aludiendo a sus opiniones sobre lo que es la vida feliz. Ahora bien, dichas opiniones no tienen su origen en la observación, sino en lo que usualmente se cree sobre esta cuestión. Dado esto, se podría afirmar que bajo la categoría “más cognoscible para nosotros” Aristóteles no solo supone las aseveraciones que pueden surgir a partir de las impresiones sensibles sino también aquellas opiniones que por estar en el acervo cultural nos resultan familiares. Si se interpreta el pasaje de la *Ética Eudemia* desde esta perspectiva, partir de las opiniones existentes y, por ende, de lo no claro, también implica tomar como punto de partida lo más cognoscible para nosotros. El procedimiento propuesto es encontrar lo que hay de verdadero en estas opiniones para, luego, poder acceder a lo inteligible en sí, itinerario que repite el proceso descrito en el pasaje citado de la *Física*.

La analogía entre los ojos del murciélago y el *noûs* usada en *Metafísica* II 1, 993b9-11<sup>25</sup> es clave para entender el motivo por el cual Aristóteles realiza la distinción aquí analizada entre “lo más cognoscible para nosotros” y “lo más cognoscible en sí”.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Lugarini (1972), p. 92.

<sup>22</sup> Woods (2005), p. 58.

<sup>23</sup> *Analíticos posteriores* I 2, 71b 33 ss. Si bien hemos trabajado con las ediciones griegas, en el caso de *Analíticos posteriores* hemos consultado también la traducción de Candel Sanmartín.

<sup>24</sup> *Física* I 1, 184a 16- 22.

<sup>25</sup> La importancia de recurrir a esta analogía para dar cuenta de la concepción epistemológica de Aristóteles es que son del mismo tipo que las empleadas en los fragmentos 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía*. Se supone que, en la misma época en la que Aristóteles estaba escribiendo los contenidos de la primera versión de la *Metafísica*, estaba redactando también este diálogo que se encuentra perdido.

<sup>26</sup> En este pasaje, Aristóteles se vale de una “metáfora por analogía”. Véase *Retórica* III 6, 1411a ss. Para Aristóteles (*Retórica* III 7, 1411b), este tipo de metáfora hace que el objeto “salte a la vista”. La expresión usada por Aristóteles es *prò ommáton poieîn*. Quintín Racionero (1990, p. 539) resalta que con esta expresión

Como los ojos del murciélago respecto de la luz del día, así se comporta el entendimiento de nuestra alma respecto de las cosas que, por naturaleza, son las más evidentes de todas (πρὸς τὰ τῇ φύσει φανερώτατα πάντων) (*Metafísica* II 1, 993b 9- 11. Trad. Calvo Martínez).

En este pasaje, Aristóteles señala que la dificultad para alcanzar la sabiduría no depende del objeto de estudio sino de la naturaleza del sujeto cognoscente.<sup>27</sup> Según el paragón trazado por Aristóteles, la luz del día es al murciélago lo que la naturaleza de los primeros principios al *noûs*. En este parangón, la luz del día representa la naturaleza de los primeros principios, que, debido a que son el fundamento ontológico de las cosas, son lo más luminoso. El *noûs* y su dificultad para conocer son equiparados a los ojos del murciélago y la imposibilidad que estos experimentan para ver la luz del día.

Alejandro de Afrodisia<sup>28</sup> interpreta la metáfora argumentando que el intelecto humano está unido a la sensación y a las potencias pasivas del alma, razón por la cual tiene algunos impedimentos para ejercer su actividad plenamente. Esta lectura parte del hecho de que el conocimiento de los primeros principios debe comenzar por los sentidos.<sup>29</sup> Según Aristóteles, el alma nunca entiende sin imágenes (*Sobre el alma* III 7, 431a16-17). De esto se desprende que, para que el *noûs* pueda actualizarse y ejercer su función, debe ser afectado por imágenes que obtiene a través de la percepción.<sup>30</sup> La ceguera o la poca adaptación a la luz, de la cual se habla en *Metafísica* II 1, 993b9- 11 como aquello que impide ver los objetos más honorables, es ocasionada por este modo particular que tiene el hombre de conocer que implica que el primer contacto con el objeto de conocimiento sea por los sentidos y, por lo tanto, esté mediado por el cuerpo.<sup>31</sup> Si el hombre, al conocer los primeros principios, no quiere sufrir el mismo efecto que el murciélago con la luz del día, deberá investigar entorno a los primeros principios, sabiendo que deberá comenzar por lo más conocido para él, esto es, por lo que percibimos a partir de los sentidos (*Física* I 1, 184a16- 22), o los *éndoxa* (*Ética Eudemia* I 6, 1216b30-35).

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Aristóteles designa “la consecuencia fundamental de la *léxis*, cuando esta se aplica a *hacer sensible* (o *representar sensiblemente*) el contenido del mensaje”. El uso de estas metáforas se debe a que, para Aristóteles, “las relaciones analógicas permiten conocer no sólo lo que pertenece a diferentes géneros y especies, -sino aún aquello que es poco o difícilmente conocido” (Femenías (1996), p. 5). Para el uso cognitivo y pedagógico de la metáfora por analogía véase también, Neumann Soto (2012), pp. 47-68.

<sup>27</sup> Aubenque (2008), p. 57.

<sup>28</sup> *Comentario a la Metafísica* 142, 19-23.

<sup>29</sup> Véase *Analíticos segundos*, II 19, 99b 15-ss.

<sup>30</sup> En relación con esto, véase la distinción trazada por Polansky (2007), p. 495 entre *enérgeia* y *enteléchia*.

<sup>31</sup> Al leer la analogía con el murciélago, es difícil no recordar algunos pasajes de los diálogos de Platón, como, por ejemplo, *República* VII 516c-d y *Fedón* 99d-e, en los cuales su autor, muestra las dificultades de conocer las Ideas de forma inmediata, sin quedar engeguado por su luz, al “verlas” por primera vez. Teniendo en cuenta que es muy probable que estos diálogos de Platón fueran conocidos por quienes asistían a las lecciones de Aristóteles, es factible pensar que el uso de esta analogía es un recurso para traer a colación algo que resultase en cierto modo familiar a sus interlocutores, con el objetivo de presentar sus propias tesis que eran más desconocidas para ellos. Es posible, por otra parte, que Aristóteles esté retomando también su analogía de *Odisea* XXIV, 4-15, donde se compara las almas con murciélagos encerrados en un antro. Valiéndose de las imágenes que aparecen en textos conocidos por sus interlocutores, Aristóteles intenta exponer sus tesis y volverlas inteligibles para ellos, pues el procedimiento por el cual se conoce los primeros principios tampoco entra dentro de las cosas que son las más conocidas para nosotros (Véase *Acerca del alma* I 1, 420a1 ss).

En la misma línea argumentativa, en el fragmento 105 del *Protréptico*, se señala:

Efectivamente, si alguien pudiera mirar con la agudeza atribuida a Linceo, que veía a través de muros y árboles, ¿podría haber considerado alguna vez a alguien digno de resistir la mirada, si hubiera visto las maldades de las que está compuesto? Los honores y la fama, que son más envidiados que ninguna otra cosa, están llenos de una futilidad indescriptible. Verdaderamente, para quien contempla una realidad eterna es necio esforzarse por todo esto. ¿Qué es grande o perdurable en las cosas humanas? Es, más bien, por nuestra debilidad y por la brevedad de la vida, creo yo, por lo que incluso esto nos parece importante (Jámblico, *Protréptico* 47. 12. 21.trad. Vallejo Campos).<sup>32</sup>

En este fragmento, Jámblico le adjudica a Aristóteles una analogía que puede ser vista como la contrapartida de la situación planteada en: *Metafísica* II. Mediante este nuevo parangón se pretende establecer qué sucedería si la vista del hombre fuese parecida a la de Linceo.

Linceo era uno de los personajes de *Los argonautas* cuya nota característica era su increíble agudeza para ver objetos a grandes distancias, atravesando, incluso, muros y cualquier otro obstáculo visual.<sup>33</sup> De hecho, el nombre Linceo suele estar asociado con *leússō*, verbo arcaico utilizado en el lenguaje épico y cuyo significado es “*dirigir la mirada hacia*” o “*ver*”.<sup>34</sup>

El mitologema sobre el cual Andrónico de Rodas escribió *Los argonautas* aparece en la *Iliada*,<sup>35</sup> en la *Odisea*<sup>36</sup> y es retomado por poetas épicos, entre los cuales se debe destacar Píndaro<sup>37</sup> y Hesíodo<sup>38</sup> y algunos otros autores, como por ejemplo Heródoto.<sup>39</sup> Esto significa que la historia<sup>40</sup> junto con sus personajes estaba en el acervo cultural en el momento en que Aristóteles escribió su *Protréptico*.

En relación con el héroe mencionado, Linceo, Vallejo Campos<sup>41</sup> resalta que la comparación presentada en este fragmento había llegado a ser un tópico en la Antigüedad, cuyos ecos pueden sentirse en el pasaje de la obra de Jámblico que pretende ser una cita del *Protréptico*.<sup>42</sup> El parangón en este sentido muestra la dificultad que el hombre tiene para conocer basándose en una situación hipotética pero irreal. Desde la perspectiva de Aristóteles, si el hombre tuviese una visión que

<sup>32</sup> En el fragmento 10a2 transmitido por Boecio en *Consolación de la filosofía* 3, 8, aparece la misma comparación.

<sup>33</sup> La contrapartida de este fragmento es el fragmento 96, en donde Aristóteles termina diciendo: “en este mundo, tal vez por ser contraria a la naturaleza la condición del género humano, adquirir el saber e investigar son difíciles”. (Fragmento 96, trad. Vallejo Campos).

<sup>34</sup> Liddell y Scott (1996), p. 1043.

<sup>35</sup> *Iliada* VII 467-471, XXI 40-41 y XXIII 745-747.

<sup>36</sup> *Odisea* XII 65- 73.

<sup>37</sup> *Pítica* IV 70- 168.

<sup>38</sup> *Teogonía* 965- 1002.

<sup>39</sup> *Historia* IV 145 ss.

<sup>40</sup> Para un análisis de la transmisión del mitologema de los argonautas, véase Valverde Sánchez (1996), p. 27.

<sup>41</sup> Vallejo Campos (2005), p. 166.

<sup>42</sup> Se podría pensar que al formular sus analogías tomando como punto de partida textos o historias conocidas por sus interlocutores, Aristóteles pone en práctica su propia concepción epistemológica y procede en su argumentación desde “lo más conocido para nosotros” (γνωριμώτερον ἡμῖν) a “lo más conocido por naturaleza” (γνωριμώτερον τῇ φύσει). Para el Estagirita, “el éxito de las lecciones depende de los hábitos del auditorio. Exigimos, desde luego, que las cosas se digan como estamos habituados, y las que se dicen de otra manera no parecen las mismas, sino más difíciles de conocer y más extrañas, al no ser habituales. Y es que lo habitual, en efecto, es más fácilmente cognoscible (*Metafísica* II 3, 994b31.995a2. Trad. Calvo Martínez).



traspasase lo visible, tal como sucede con Linceo, no tendría dificultades en conocer aquello que es de naturaleza inteligible, pese a tener un cuerpo. Sin embargo, como esta situación no es real y tal visión es propia de un ser extraordinario y no humano, conocer lo que verdaderamente es es una tarea difícil que sólo puede comenzar por aquello que es más familiar para nosotros: lo sensible. No obstante, se presenta el siguiente problema: los hombres en general no logran traspasar la frontera de lo sensible, razón por la cual toman lo que perciben por los sentidos como bienes auténticos. Por este motivo, no buscan aquello que constituye su verdadero bien: los principios que determinan qué es verdaderamente bello, bueno y justo.

De lo desarrollado más arriba se desprende que en tanto en *Metafísica* como en el *Protréptico* Aristóteles plantea la naturaleza y limitación del conocimiento humano. Esto constituye el fundamento de la distinción “más conocido en sí” y “más conocido para nosotros”. En ambas obras, para dar cuenta de esto acude a una serie de analogías perceptuales y una terminología visual que aparecerán en las dos versiones del fragmento 8 de *Sobre la filosofía*, que analizaremos en el siguiente apartado.

## 2. “lo más conocido en sí” y “lo más conocido para nosotros” en 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía*

Los fragmentos 8b y 8c suelen citarse para clarificar las palabras iniciales de *Metafísica* II 1. En ambos, aparece la concepción de la sabiduría como el conocimiento de los primeros principios. Para dar cuenta de esta concepción, Filópono y Asclepio se valen de metáforas lumínicas, cuyo sentido no aclaran. En un pasaje del *Comentario de la Introducción aritmética de Nicómaco* I 1, conocido también como el fragmento 8b de *Sobre la filosofía*, “citando” a Aristóteles, Filópono dice:

Así pues, la sabiduría (σοφία) fue llamada así como si fuera cierta claridad (οἶονεὶ σάφειά τις οὖσα), en tanto que clarifica (σαφηνίζουσα) todas las cosas. Esta condición de lo claro (τὸ σαφές), al ser algo luminoso, recibe su denominación de la luz y la luminosidad (παρὰ τὸ φάος καὶ φῶς), por traer a la luz (εἰς φῶς) las cosas que están ocultas (τὰ κεκρυμμένα) (trad. Vallejo Campos).<sup>43</sup>

El pasaje pertenece al comentario de la obra del pitagórico Nicómaco de Gerasa, contemporáneo de Numenio. En su comentario, Filópono señala que para Nicómaco la sabiduría es el conocimiento de lo real y que lo real no es de naturaleza sensible, sino inteligible. En este contexto, sostiene que, para Aristóteles, la sabiduría es la ciencia de los objetos más luminosos. Para ello, le adjudica a Aristóteles un juego de palabras entre *sophía* (sabiduría) y *sápheia* (claridad), que en realidad está presente en buena parte del comentario.

<sup>43</sup> La inclusión de este fragmento en las ediciones y traducciones de *Sobre la filosofía* ha sido motivo de algunas controversias. Jaeger (1991), p. 60 n. 28 lo cuestiona por su aparente impronta estoica. Bignone (1973), p. 519 lo considera parte del *Protréptico* de Aristóteles. El paralelismo entre este fragmento, *Metafísica* II y el fragmento 8c, que citaremos parcialmente más adelante, fue la causa de que algunos autores, como, por ejemplo, Festugière (1949), p. 587; Untersteiner (1960), p.121 ss. y Berti (1997), p. 264-265, considerasen que pertenecía a *Sobre la filosofía*.

Al atribuirle a Aristóteles esta asociación, Filópono trae a colación una vinculación entre dos términos que ya existía dentro de la lengua griega y que aparece testimoniada en otros escritos del Estagirita.<sup>44</sup> De hecho, Liddell y Scott<sup>45</sup> señalan que el término *sápheia* se habría acuñado para explicar el término *sophía*. Para dar cuenta de esto, citan el *Comentario de la Metafísica* de Asclepio (3, 27- 33), conocido también por ser uno de los fragmentos de *Sobre la filosofía* (fragmento 8c). Para estos estudiosos, uno de los significados de *sápheia* es el de conocimiento claro o lo que es claro o manifiesto a la mente. En esta misma línea, Chantraine<sup>46</sup> sostiene que la familia de palabras de *sápheia* expresa la idea de evidencia y de claridad, entendiendo por esto una visión objetiva.

En cuanto a *Sobre la filosofía*, la relación entre estos términos, *sophía* y *sápheia* con *kekrumména* nos permite suponer que la sabiduría es el desocultamiento de lo que verdaderamente es. Sin embargo, al interpretar el fragmento 8b de este modo no estamos diciendo nada que aporte verdadera comprensión al texto. Creemos que se puede hacer una lectura mucho más rica y fructífera del fragmento 8b a la luz de algunos de los pasajes de las otras obras de Aristóteles, en los que, tal como lo vimos en el apartado anterior, su autor hace uso de metáforas similares. Uno de estos pasajes es *Metafísica* II 1, 993b9- 11. A partir de este análisis, se puede decir que la tesis que Filópono le adjudica a Aristóteles en el fragmento 8b está en la misma línea que lo argumentado por este último en el pasaje señalado de la *Metafísica*.<sup>47</sup> En este pasaje, al proponer el parangón entre los ojos del murciélago y el *noûs*, Aristóteles habría equiparado la luz del día con los principios. Algo parecido sucede en el fragmento 8b de *Sobre la filosofía*, en donde se describe al objeto de la sabiduría como lo más luminoso. Las analogías realizadas en ambos casos presuponen lo siguiente: así como la luz muestra las cosas y la oscuridad las oculta, el conocimiento deja al descubierto lo que las cosas son, mientras que su ignorancia produce el efecto contrario.

Lo que Filópono (fragmento 8b) describe como oculto es aquello cuya realidad se quiere conocer. El epíteto “ocultas” es una manera metafórica de decir que estas cosas son desconocidas o ignoradas. Ahora bien, los principios son lo que determina esencialmente a las cosas, lo que explica por qué son lo que son, razón por la cual solo en la medida en que conozcamos esos principios las cosas dejarán de ser oscuras o ignoradas.

Si leemos los textos de este modo, podemos decir que tanto en *Metafísica*, como en *Sobre la filosofía*, el uso de la metáfora lumínica opera en dos niveles diferentes pero relacionados, reproduciendo la misma lógica argumentativa. En un primer plano, se estaría describiendo a los principios, objeto de la filosofía, tal como son en sí mismos. Desde esta perspectiva, los principios son lo más luminoso y claro, pues son los que aportan el conocimiento de las cosas (*Física* I 1, 184a16- 22). Las cosas que para nosotros son las más claras, porque son aquellas con las cuales tenemos un trato frecuente, consideradas en sí mismas, son también las más oscuras o las que están ocultas, pues estas no son conocidas por sí, sino a partir de esos principios que las fundamentan.

<sup>44</sup> En el *Index Aristotelicus*, al dar cuenta de los diferentes sentidos de “*sophía*”, trayendo a colación un pasaje de la *Gran Ética* (1197a 23-30), Bonitz (1870), p. 688, cita: “φιλοσοφία: ὁλως ζητέσης τῆς σοφίας περὶ τῶν φανερῶν τὸ αἴτιον.

<sup>45</sup> Liddell y Scott (1996), p. 1586.

<sup>46</sup> Chantraine (1990), p. 991.

<sup>47</sup> *Acerca del alma* II 2, 413a11-13.



En un segundo nivel y teniendo en cuenta que “lo más conocido en sí” es lo más difícil de entender,<sup>48</sup> el uso de las metáforas lumínicas<sup>49</sup> obedece a la implementación del principio aristotélico según el cual en el orden del conocimiento se debe proceder de lo más conocido para nosotros a lo más conocido en sí. En Ambas obras se recurre a analogías que son claramente entendibles por el auditorio para presentar algo que es oscuro: el papel que tienen los primeros principios en el conocimiento de las cosas.<sup>50</sup>

En la segunda parte del fragmento 8b, Filópono parece confirmar la tesis aquí defendida, a saber, que la alternancia del binomio luz/oscuridad que aparece en *Sobre la filosofía* presupone la distinción “más cognoscible en sí” / “más cognoscible para nosotros”:

Ciertamente, dado que las cosas inteligibles (τὰ νοητά) y divinas (θεῖα), como dice Aristóteles, a pesar de ser clarísimas (φανερότατα) en virtud de su propia entidad (τὴν ἑαυτῶν οὐσίαν), a nosotros nos parecen tenebrosas y confusas, por la niebla en la que el cuerpo nos envuelve (ἡμῖν διὰ τὴν ἐπικειμένην τοῦ σώματος ἀχλὺν σκοτεινὰ δοκεῖ), es natural que le diera el nombre de sabiduría a la ciencia que nos trae estas cosas a la luz (εἰς φῶς).<sup>51</sup>

En este pasaje del fragmento 8b, Filópono le atribuye a Aristóteles el hecho de que las cosas inteligibles y divinas pueden ser consideradas según su propia identidad (*katà tèn heautôn ousían*) o desde nuestro punto de vista (*hemín*), esto es, tal como se nos presentan a nosotros (*hemín*).<sup>52</sup> La contraposición entre *katà tèn heautôn ousían*

<sup>48</sup> Remitimos acá a la primera parte de nuestro trabajo donde hacemos un esbozo de las causas de esta dificultad.

<sup>49</sup> Según Aubenque (2008), p. 57-59, la distinción entre “lo más conocido en sí” y “lo más conocido para nosotros”, expresada, incluso, a través de estas metáforas lumínicas es retomada por Aristóteles de Platón. Para defender su tesis, Aubenque pasa revista a algunos pasajes del *Parménides*, entre ellos, 133c ss. y *República*, especialmente de los libros VI (509b) y VII (515d-516b). Pese a que no analizaremos aquí el uso de las metáforas lumínicas en la obra platónica, debemos concederle a Aubenque el hecho de que, hacia el final de *República* VI, más específicamente 515e 1-516b 7, al introducir la Idea de Bien y querer hablar sobre su naturaleza, Platón plantea una problemática y abordaje muy parecidos al presentado por Aristóteles en el fragmento 8b de *Sobre la filosofía*. Para Platón, el Bien es el principio más elevado, aquel por el cual todas las cosas tienen su ser y pueden ser conocidas. El Bien, al igual que los principios aristotélicos, en tanto otorga inteligibilidad a las cosas, es lo más luminoso. No obstante, el hombre se encuentra incapacitado para conocerlo directamente, pues su propia naturaleza corpórea le impone un límite. Para poder conocer dicho principio, los hombres deberán realizar un camino progresivo de carácter ascendente en el cual irán adaptando su estructura cognitiva al objeto que desean conocer.

No obstante, el examen de los pasajes del *corpus* citados en este trabajo nos lleva a pensar que la presencia de concepciones platónicas en el fragmento 8b de *Sobre la filosofía* puede deberse no solo al legado platónico en el pensamiento aristotélico, sino también a la pertenencia de ambos pensadores a una tradición filosófica que tiende a vincular el saber y el conocimiento con la luz. Un ejemplo de esto es, sin lugar a duda, Parménides. Véase, por ejemplo, los fragmentos 28 B1, 8-11 (Sexto Empírico, *Contra los matemáticos*, VII 111) y 28 B 9, 1-4 (Simplicio, *Comentario a la Física*. 180, 9-12).

<sup>50</sup> *Tópicos* IV 2, 140a9-10: En efecto, la metáfora hace de alguna manera cognoscible lo significado gracias a la semejanza.

<sup>51</sup> *La introducción de la aritmética de Nicómaco* I 1. trad. Vallejo Campos.

<sup>52</sup> En nuestra lectura suponemos que las cosas calificadas de “inteligibles” y “divinas” son los primeros principios y causas, pues, si bien en los pasajes aquí analizados no se los llama así, en otras obras aristotélicas contemporáneas a *Sobre la filosofía*, como, por ejemplo, en el *Protréptico*- fragmentos 33- 36-, Aristóteles dice que el objeto de la sabiduría es el conocimiento de las causas y principios supremos. Esta misma tesis aparece en la *Metafísica* I 1, 9821-2, en donde Aristóteles sostiene que: “la sabiduría es ciencia acerca de ciertos principios y causas”.

y *hemîn* es sumamente importante. Si tenemos en cuenta que para Aristóteles la *ousía* de cada cosa es su esencia,<sup>53</sup> al afirmar que, consideradas según su entidad, las cosas inteligibles son claras, lo que está diciendo Filópono es que, para Aristóteles, las cosas vistas desde esta perspectiva son consideradas a partir de su naturaleza y, por lo tanto, son calificadas como claras cuando se las piensa de este modo. De esto se infiere que la expresión *katà tèn heautôn ousían* puede ser interpretada como una variante de “lo que es sí” o “lo que es por naturaleza”.<sup>54</sup> De aquí que las expresiones “*katà tèn heautôn ousían*” y “*hemîn*” podría suponer las distinciones entre “lo que es más cognoscible en sí” y “lo que es más cognoscible para nosotros” o “lo más claro en sí y “lo más claro para nosotros”. Si bien la contraposición no es explícitamente formulada, como sucede en *Física* I 1, 184a 16- 22 o *Metafísica* VII 3, 1029a 1-4, está claramente presente en el fragmento y es indispensable para comprender el sentido de lo que se quiere transmitir.

En este fragmento, por un lado, se reconoce que existen ciertos objetos que son en sí mismos luminosos porque hacen cognoscible al resto de las cosas. Pero, por otro, se admite que, dada nuestra naturaleza corpórea, esos objetos son para nosotros oscuros. Al igual que en la *Física*<sup>55</sup> y la *Ética Eudemia*,<sup>56</sup> Aristóteles estaría analizando la misma clase de objetos desde dos perspectivas diferentes: considerados en sí mismos y tomados desde el punto de vista humano.<sup>57</sup> De acuerdo con cuál de estas dos perspectivas se tome, estos mismos objetos resultan claros u oscuros. Por tal motivo, si se acepta lo afirmado hasta aquí, el fragmento 8b puede ser visto no solo como una versión de la formulación del proceder metodológico presentado por Aristóteles en *Física* I 1, 184a16- 22, *Metafísica* VII 3, 1029a1-4 y *Ética Eudemia* I 6, 1216b30-35, sino también como una variante de las analogías usadas en *Metafísica* II 1 y en el fragmento 105 del *Protréptico*.

Una versión en cierto sentido paralela del fragmento 8b nos ha llegado a través del comentario de Asclepio a la *Metafísica*:<sup>58</sup>

Hay que tener en cuenta que se titula Sabiduría, Filosofía, Filosofía Primera y Metafísica, puesto que, habiendo tratado sobre cuestiones físicas anteriormente, en esta obra trata de entidades divinas; en consecuencia, a causa de este orden, recibió tal denominación: se llama sabiduría (*sophía*), como si fuera una cierta claridad (σοφία δὲ οἰονεὶ σάφειά τις οὖσα), pues las entidades divinas (τὰ θεῖα) son claras y manifiestas en grado máximo

<sup>53</sup> *Metafísica* VII 7, 1041b4-9; 1041b28-31.

<sup>54</sup> En su comentario a los *Analíticos posteriores* I 33, 89a38, pp. 8-22, Filópono presupone la misma distinción, al sostener que, según Aristóteles, cierto conocimiento es llamado “sabiduría como si la sabiduría fuese algo a partir de lo cual las cosas divinas llegasen a ser más claras para nosotros: pues las cosas divinas son, como Aristóteles mismo lo dice, las cosas más manifiestas (*phanótata*) y también las más claras. <Son > más manifiestas por su propia naturaleza (*dià tèn heautôn phýsin*), pero <son> las más claras puesto que el conocimiento (*gnôsis*) se produce para nosotros a partir de las cosas más visibles”. (trad. propia. Edición de Wallies (1909)).

<sup>55</sup> *Física* I 1, 184a16-22 (citado en la primera parte del trabajo).

<sup>56</sup> *Ética Eudemia* I 6, 1216b30-35 (citado en la primera parte del trabajo).

<sup>57</sup> Estas dos perspectivas no son contradictorias. De hecho, en la medida en que el hombre conoce los primeros principios, siguiendo el procedimiento metodológico descrito en este trabajo, logra que “lo más claro en sí” coincida con “lo más claro para nosotros”, razón por la cual lo que antes le resultaba oscuro, se transforma en lo más claro.

<sup>58</sup> Es importante señalar que Amonio y Asclepio habían realizado un análisis minucioso de los primeros siete libros de la *Metafísica* de Aristóteles, incluido el libro *Alfa Menor*. Según Cardullo (2008), pp. 244-245, el comentario de Asclepio a *Alfa* es el único comentario de inspiración neoplatónica en lengua griega, redactado a partir de “la voz” de Amonio. Para la distinción entre la escuela neoplatónica de Atenas y Alejandría, véase Cardullo (2008).

(σαφή καὶ φανερώτατα) y esta ciencia trata, efectivamente, de entidades divinas (Περὶ γὰρ θεῶν διαλέγεται). En atención a ello la llama ‘Sabiduría’. De hecho, en la *Apodictica* afirma: ‘como ya lo he dicho, en los tratados *Sobre la Sabiduría*’.<sup>59</sup>

El pasaje del comentario de Asclepio no es incluido como un fragmento de *Sobre la filosofía* por la mayoría de los editores o traductores del texto. Los editores que lo incluyen son Untersteiner y Giannantoni. No es tenido en cuenta por Ross, cuya edición es seguida por gran parte de los traductores del texto, ni por Cherniss,<sup>60</sup> quien considera que Asclepio estaría aludiendo a *Metafísica* II 1, 993b7-11, pasaje en el cual Aristóteles presenta la analogía entre los ojos del murciélago y el *noûs*.

En relación con el argumento de Cherniss nos interesa recalcar dos cosas. La primera es que si bien, dado el análisis que hicimos de esa analogía, la lectura este autor es plausible, al adoptarla, se debe tener en cuenta que el pasaje citado de Asclepio no aparece en el comentario a *Metafísica* II, sino que está inserto en su análisis de las primeras líneas de *Metafísica* I 1. El pasaje puede ser una remisión temprana a la analogía que el Estagirita desplegará en el segundo libro. Ahora bien, sostener esto es tan hipotético como creer que Asclepio está haciendo referencia a la obra perdida de Aristóteles. La segunda cuestión es que, si, pese a esto, alguien estuviese inclinado a aceptar la tesis de Cherniss, la afinidad que se puede trazar entre *Metafísica* II 1, el pasaje de Filópono y el de Asclepio nos siguen habilitando a recurrir al comentario de este último para dilucidar el sentido de las metáforas lumínicas usadas en *Sobre la filosofía*, razón por la cual su análisis es pertinente.

Desde la perspectiva de Asclepio, Aristóteles concibe la *sophía* como una especie de luz, pues se ocupa de las entidades divinas y más claras.<sup>61</sup> Pese a que, por los pasajes analizados de la *Física*, de la *Metafísica* y de la *Ética Nicomáquea* sabemos que “lo más claro” puede ser “lo más conocido en sí mismo” o “lo más conocido para nosotros”, sabemos que, cuando es usado para referirse a las entidades divinas o los primeros principios, considerados en sí mismos, solo puede tener el primer sentido.<sup>62</sup> Leído el fragmento 8c de este modo, las entidades divinas son anteriores porque, además de ser el fundamento ontológico de las cosas, son las causas, por las cuales estas pueden ser conocidas. La metáfora lumínica sirve para resaltar esta doble prioridad de las entidades divinas sobre el resto de las cosas, pues sirve para poner de manifiesto que estas entidades son anteriores por naturaleza y son aquello que es más conocido en sí mismo.<sup>63</sup> La sabiduría, al ser el conocimiento de esas entidades, pasa a ser definida también como una luz que destierra la tiniebla de la ignorancia haciendo que realicemos el pasaje de lo más conocido para nosotros a lo más conocido en sí.

<sup>59</sup> *Comentario a la Metafísica* 3, 27-33. trad. Vallejo Campos.

<sup>60</sup> Cherniss (1959), p. 38.

<sup>61</sup> Tendemos a creer nuevamente que mediante la expresión “las entidades divinas y más claras” Aristóteles se refiere a los primeros principios y causas.

<sup>62</sup> *Categorías* 13, 14b11-13: “en efecto, entre las cosas reversibles según la implicación de existencia podría verosimilmente decirse que la causa de la existencia de cualquier otra cosa es anterior por naturaleza”. *Metafísica* V 11, 1019a1-3: “Algunas cosas se dice que son anteriores y posteriores en este sentido, y otras que lo son según la naturaleza y la entidad: así, todas las cosas que pueden existir sin otras, pero no estas sin ellas, distinción esta que utilizaba Platón”.

<sup>63</sup> Tal como lo señala Cleary (1988), p. 45, se debe partir del supuesto de que el orden del conocimiento sigue al orden del ser.

Lo relevante, en lo que a nuestro trabajo compete, es que en las líneas inmediatamente anteriores de lo que se cree es una cita de *Sobre la filosofía*, Asclepio<sup>64</sup> sostiene que, pese a que los primeros principios tienen prioridad ontológica y epistemológica, Aristóteles considera que es lo último que se debe conocer, pues es lo más difícil de aprehender.<sup>65</sup> Por tal razón, Asclepio sostiene que Aristóteles en sus lecciones parte de las cosas más imperfectas, pero más accesibles para nosotros, hacia aquellas que son perfectas pero difícil de aprender. Lo que queremos indicar con esto es que el contexto en el cual está inserto el fragmento 8c puede ser leído como la interpretación de Asclepio del principio epistémico aquí analizado, según el cual se debe proceder de “lo más conocido para nosotros” a lo más conocido en sí”. Si bien este principio no es formulado en estos términos en el capítulo primero de la *Metafísica*, Asclepio considera que Aristóteles lo está implementando en el orden de su exposición. Como consecuencia de esto, al leer el pasaje de Asclepio en este contexto y analizar el uso de las metáforas en él empleadas, es difícil no tener ciertas reminiscencias del modo de proceder de Aristóteles en *Física I 1* e interpretar que están operando los mismos principios epistemológicos.

En el *Comentario de la Introducción aritmética de Nicómaco* (α 9-12), Asclepio sostiene:

Aristóteles llama más luminosas a las cosas que se manifiestan a sí mismas y <son> puras, pues verdaderamente la claridad (τὸ σαφές) a través de sí misma lleva de este modo a las cosas cubiertas en las penumbras de la ignorancia (ἐν σκοτῶ τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ) hacia la luz y el conocimiento (εἰς φῶς καὶ γνῶσιν ἐπιφέρειν). Seguimos la edición de Tarán (1969).

En este pasaje, Asclepio le adjudica a Aristóteles las mismas metáforas lumínicas que las empleadas en los fragmentos 8b y 8c para enfatizar la distinción entre lo que es más cognoscible y lo menos cognoscible.<sup>66</sup> Se debe destacar en este pasaje la contraposición entre los circunstanciales “en la penumbra de la ignorancia” (ἐν σκοτῶ τῇ ἀγνοίᾳ) y “hacia la luz y el conocimiento” (εἰς φῶς καὶ γνῶσιν). La claridad o verdad, ambas traducciones posibles para *saphés*, es lo que nos saca de la niebla de la ignorancia y nos lleva hacia la luz o el conocimiento. El fragmento 102 del *Protréptico* puede resultar clave para entender el juego de contraposiciones adjudicadas a Aristóteles en este pasaje:

También el hecho de que la mayoría rehúya la muerte muestra el amor del alma por el saber, pues rehúye lo que no conoce (μὴ γινώσκει), lo oscuro (τὸ σκοτῶδες) y lo que no es claro (τὸ μὴ δῆλον), mientras que por naturaleza persigue lo manifiesto y cognoscible (φύσει δὲ διώκει τὸ φανερόν καὶ τὸ γνωστόν). También decimos mayormente por esto que debemos honrar por encima de todo a quienes son causa de que veamos el sol y la luz y que debemos venerar a nuestro padre y a nuestra madre como causa de nuestros mayores bienes. Son causa, según parece, de que podamos pensar y ver.

<sup>64</sup> *Comentario a la Metafísica* 3, 22-33.

<sup>65</sup> Para un análisis pormenorizado de los sentidos de prioridad, véase Cleary (1988).

<sup>66</sup> El motivo por el cual traemos a colación este pasaje es que el *Comentario de la Introducción aritmética de Nicómaco* está estrechamente vinculado con el comentario a esta misma obra de Filópono, del cual se extrae el fragmento 8b de *Sobre la filosofía*. Si bien, tal como lo recalca Giardina (1999), p. 51, la relación entre ambos comentarios es compleja, no se puede negar la correspondencia existente entre ambos.

Por este mismo motivo nos alegramos con todo aquello que nos resulta acostumbrado, ya sean cosas o personas, y llamamos queridos a los conocidos. Así pues, esto muestra claramente que lo cognoscible, lo manifiesto y lo evidente es deseable (δηλοῖ οὖν ταῦτα σαφῶς ὅτι τὸ γνωστόν καὶ <τὸ> φανερόν καὶ τὸ δῆλον ἀγαπητόν ἐστιν) y, si lo son lo cognoscible y lo claro, evidentemente será por necesidad también el conocer (τὸ γινώσκειν) y del mismo modo el pensar (τὸ φρονεῖν) (Jámblico *Protréptico* 46-8 31. trad. Vallejo Campos).

En este fragmento, al igual que en el pasaje de la obra de Asclepio, se puede diferenciar dos campos semánticos contrapuestos: el de lo conocido y el de lo desconocido. Dentro del primero, está aquello que Jámblico califica de “oscuro” y no “claro.” Bajo el segundo, podemos colocar lo caracterizado como “manifiesto” o “evidente”. Lo más conocido es lo más manifiesto, pues arroja luz sobre el resto de las cosas.

Tal como lo indica Zanatta,<sup>67</sup> el argumento del fragmento del *Protréptico* está estructurado sobre la relación entre sabiduría y claridad del conocimiento. Puesto que es el conocimiento de las causas o fundamentos ontológicos de todas las cosas,<sup>68</sup> la sabiduría será también aquel tipo de ciencia que los vuelve cognoscibles.<sup>69</sup> Por tal motivo, este tipo de conocimiento no solo es superior, sino también más claro, ya que es el conocimiento de lo que las cosas verdaderamente son. A través de él, es posible conocer el resto de las cosas; por lo tanto, si aceptamos la equiparación luz – conocimiento, presupuesta en el fragmento 102, las iluminará tornándolas visibles.

El otro punto relevante de este fragmento es el uso de “*phýsei*”. El motivo por el cual nos interesa el empleo de esta circunstancial es que, al igual que en la *Física*, Aristóteles señala que lo que está describiendo es un proceso que el hombre realiza naturalmente. Desde la perspectiva aristotélica, si lo cognoscible, lo manifiesto y claro es lo más deseable, entonces también deben serlo el conocer y pensar. Tal placer o deseo no sería uno más entre otros, sino constitutivo de la naturaleza humana.

Sin embargo, el uso de esta circunstancial es mucho más rico y ambiguo. Si bien hemos adoptado la traducción de Vallejo Campos, según la cual el hombre “por naturaleza persigue lo manifiesto y cognoscible”, también es posible traducir la frase del siguiente modo: “el hombre persigue lo que es manifiesto y cognoscible por naturaleza”.<sup>70</sup> Esto cobra relevancia, si tenemos en cuenta que una línea más arriba Aristóteles habría dicho que nos alegramos con aquello a “lo que estamos acostumbrados”, esto es, habituados. La relación de ambos tipos de cosas, las conocidas por naturaleza y aquellas a las que estamos acostumbrados, refleja de alguna manera la conexión entre “lo más conocido para nosotros” y “lo más conocido en sí o por naturaleza”. El paragón es el siguiente: así como nos alegramos al ver las cosas que son familiares o habituales por el grado de frecuentación que tenemos con ellas, debemos contentarnos con lo que por sí mismo es claro y manifiesto.

Tanto Asclepio, en el *Comentario de la Introducción aritmética de Nicómaco*, como Jámblico, en el *Protréptico*, le adjudican a Aristóteles la tesis según la cual lo que constituye el fundamento de lo captable por medio de los sentidos no puede ser

<sup>67</sup> Zanatta (2008), p. 268, n 64.

<sup>68</sup> *Protréptico* fragmentos 33-35.

<sup>69</sup> *Protréptico* fragmentos 47-49

<sup>70</sup> Tendemos a creer que el circunstancial “por naturaleza” es un *apò koinoû* que modifica sintácticamente a “persiguen” y a “lo que es manifiesto y cognoscible”.

hallado por los sentidos mismos, sino apartándose de ellos.<sup>71</sup> Esto no implica que el conocimiento pueda prescindir de lo sensible, sino que, tal como lo había dicho Aristóteles en el pasaje citado de la *Física* (I 1, 184a 16- 22) es natural que en el conocimiento vayamos de lo más conocido para nosotros a lo más conocido en sí.<sup>72</sup> Las metáforas lumínicas adjudicadas por Filópono, Asclepio y Jámblico a Aristóteles traducen este proceso descrito en muchas obras del *corpus* y que constituye uno de los núcleos de la epistemología aristotélica.

### 3. Conclusiones

En el presente trabajo hemos intentado mostrar que en *Sobre la filosofía* Aristóteles habría presentado su concepción acerca de la sabiduría tomando como punto de partida su supuesto epistemológico, según el cual en el orden del conocimiento debemos proceder de “lo más conocido para nosotros” a “lo más conocido en sí”. Para ello, nos focalizamos en el análisis de los fragmentos 8b y 8c, transmitidos por Asclepio y Filópono, respectivamente. En estos fragmentos, se le atribuye a Aristóteles una serie de metáforas lumínicas que, desde nuestra perspectiva, sirve para replicar esta distinción. Para poder demostrar esta tesis, hemos dividido el trabajo en dos apartados. En el primero, nos hemos detenido en el análisis de la distinción entre “lo más cognoscible en sí” y “lo más cognoscible para nosotros”, con el fin de demostrar que en algunas de sus obras, como, por ejemplo, la *Física*, el *Protréptico*, la *Metafísica* y la *Ética Eudemia*, Aristóteles apela a un lenguaje perceptual o a metáforas lumínicas para dar cuenta de esta distinción. Con esto, hemos querido sentar un precedente que sirviese para entender el uso de estas metáforas en *Sobre la filosofía*.

En esta primera parte, establecimos que lo más claro o lo más oscuro recibe ese calificativo dependiendo de la perspectiva desde la cual se lo analice. Considerados en sí mismos, los primeros principios son claros, porque solo hay verdadero conocimiento cuando se conocen dichos principios. Sin embargo, debido a la naturaleza inteligible de estos principios y a nuestra constitución corporal, son lo más alejado de nosotros y, por lo tanto, lo más difícil de conocer y lo menos claro o manifiesto para nosotros. Para dar cuenta de esta dificultad, nos hemos detenido en el examen de *Metafísica* II 1, 993b9-11 y el fragmento B105 del *Protréptico*, en donde Aristóteles utiliza el parangón entre la vista del murciélago y la actividad noética y realiza la comparación entre la actividad cognitiva humana y la vista de Linceo, respectivamente.

Sobre la base de este análisis, en el segundo apartado, nos hemos focalizado en el examen de las metáforas lumínicas empleadas en los fragmentos 8b y 8c de *Sobre la filosofía*. En ambos fragmentos hay una identificación implícita entre las cosas inteligibles y divinas con los primeros principios. Sobre la base de esta equiparación, podemos interpretar que Filópono (fragmento 8b) le adjudica a Aristóteles la tesis según la cual los primeros principios pueden ser considerados desde dos perspectivas

<sup>71</sup> Fragmento 76 del *Protréptico*, fragmento 8b de *Sobre la filosofía*.

<sup>72</sup> Para Aristóteles, “aquello que es claro en sí y más cognoscible, desde el punto de vista de la razón (κατὰ τὸν λόγον γνωριμώτερον), suele emerger partiendo de lo que en sí es oscuro, pero más asequible” (*Acerca del alma* II 2, 413a11-13)



diferentes: 1) según su *ousía*, esto es, por lo que son en sí mismos y 2) tal como se nos presenta a nosotros. Cuando son pensados del primer modo, son lo más claro o luminoso, razón por la cual son lo que permite conocer qué son las cosas y cómo están constituidas. Cuando son observados tal como se nos aparecen es lo más oscuro y difícil de conocer. Esto se debe a que, si bien los primeros principios son de naturaleza inteligible, los hombres comienzan el proceso cognitivo a partir de los sentidos, razón por la cual no solo son difíciles de aprehender, sino que además, examinados desde este punto de vista, son lo más distante y difuso. (*Metafísica* II 1, 993b9- 11, fragmento 105 del *Protréptico* y *Física* I 1).

Esta misma distinción aparece esbozada en 8c, cuyo contexto argumentativo es la interpretación de Asclepio del modo de proceder de Aristóteles en sus propias lecciones. Para Asclepio, en su exposición, Aristóteles comienza por lo más fácil de conocer, aunque esto sea imperfecto, las entidades sensibles, hasta alcanzar lo que es más difícil de conocer pero de naturaleza perfecta: los primeros principios. Con esto, tanto Asclepio como Filópono le atribuyen a Aristóteles la tesis según la cual lo que es primero en el orden ontológico y epistemológico es lo último en el orden de la exposición o en el orden de la adquisición del conocimiento. Dicha tesis es el supuesto básico de la distinción entre “lo más cognoscible en sí mismo” y “lo más cognoscible para nosotros”. El análisis de los fragmentos 8b y 8c a la luz de los pasajes analizados de la *Física*, *Ética Eudemia*, *Metafísica* y el *Protréptico* nos permite concluir que en *Sobre la filosofía* opera con los mismos supuestos epistemológicos que en sus obras esotéricas y más estudiadas. En esta obra fragmentaria el uso de las metáforas no solo es una evidencia de la distinción entre “lo más conocido en sí” y “lo más conocido para nosotros”, sino también el intento de Aristóteles de poner en práctica su propio principio epistémico, para hacer comprensible su concepción de la sabiduría como la ciencia de los primeros principios y causas.

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## ARISTÓTELES, EL SOCRÁTICO. ALGUNOS LÍMITES DE LA CRÍTICA ARISTOTÉLICA AL INTELLECTUALISMO SOCRÁTICO<sup>1</sup>

### Aristotle, the Socratic. Some Limits of Aristotle's Review on Socratic Intellectualism

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#### RESUMEN

Es por demás conocida la crítica que Aristóteles presenta en el libro VII de *Ética nicomaquea* al así llamado "intellectualismo socrático" (IS), según el cual nadie actúa de modo tal que su acción resulte en un mal (en principio, para sí mismo) a sabiendas, es decir, voluntariamente. Si algo así ocurriera, se explicaría porque el agente ignoraba que (se) estaba haciendo un mal. Aristóteles objeta, como es sabido, la incompatibilidad que tal teoría presenta con los *παινόμενα*. Sin embargo, en numerosas ocasiones concede parte de razón a la posición socrática. El objetivo de este trabajo es doble: (i) revisar el modo en que Aristóteles puede haber entendido el IS tal como le fue transmitido por Platón (su fuente indirecta del pensamiento socrático) a propósito de quien está sabiendo actualmente que lo que está por hacer no es bueno; (ii) revisar por qué, en ese aspecto puntual, la posición del propio Aristóteles no resulta, como suele afirmarse, tan distante de la socrática.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Sócrates, Aristóteles, incontinencia, intellectualismo, ética.*

#### ABSTRACT

Aristotelian criticism of the so called "Socratic intellectualism" in *Nicomachean Ethics* VII is well known. However, on many occasions Aristotle gives part of reason to the Socratic position. The aim of this work is twofold: (i) to review a specific aspect of the way in which Aristotle may have understood Socratic intellectualism specially regarding someone who is actually knowing that what he or she is about to do is wrong; (ii) to review why, in that specific aspect, Aristotle's own position is not, as is often said, so distant from the Socratic.

**KEYWORDS:** *Socrates, Aristotle, weakness of Will, intellectualism, ethics.*

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## ARISTÓTELES, EL SOCRÁTICO. ALGUNOS LÍMITES DE LA CRÍTICA ARISTOTÉLICA AL INTELLECTUALISMO SOCRÁTICO

### INTRODUCCIÓN

Es por demás conocida la crítica que Aristóteles presenta en el libro VII de *Ética nicomaquea* al así llamado “intelectualismo socrático” (IS), según el cual nadie actúa de modo tal que su acción resulte en un mal (en principio, para sí mismo) a sabiendas, es decir, voluntariamente. Si algo así ocurriera, se explicaría porque el agente ignoraba que (se) estaba realizando un mal. Aristóteles objeta, como es sabido, la incompatibilidad que tal teoría presenta con los φαινόμενα.<sup>2</sup> Sin embargo, en numerosas ocasiones concede parte de razón a la posición socrática.<sup>3</sup>

El objetivo de este trabajo es doble: (i) revisar un aspecto puntual del modo en que Aristóteles puede haber entendido el IS tal como le fue transmitido por Platón (su fuente indirecta del pensamiento socrático); (ii) revisar por qué, en ese aspecto puntual, la posición del propio Aristóteles no resulta, como suele afirmarse, tan distante de la socrática.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> οὗτος ὁ λόγος ἀμφισβητεῖ τοῖς φαινόμενοις ἐναργῶς (1145b27-28). No me voy a extender en el significado de φαινόμενα en este pasaje, para lo cual remito a la discusión exhaustiva en Hardie (1968, pp. 264-265). En concreto, interpreto que con φαινόμενα Aristóteles está haciendo referencia más bien a lo que se opina y dice sobre la incontinencia que a los “hechos observados”. No se denuncia que la posición socrática discrepa de lo que se observa en los hechos, sino de lo que suele decirse al respecto, a saber: que hay gente que no sigue el mejor curso de acción posible a sabiendas y que esa gente debe ser responsabilizada por sus acciones. Mal podría Aristóteles estar diciendo que la teoría socrática discrepa de los hechos cuando, como intentaré mostrar, el propio Aristóteles sostiene la misma posición que Sócrates en los términos en los que el hijo de la partera la formula. Su impugnación del intelectualismo socrático no apunta a su falsedad, sino a su incompletitud y parcialidad. Para esta línea hermenéutica, cf. Dahl (1984, p. 143); para la relevancia de los φαινόμενα, ἐνδοξα y λεγόμενα en EN, cf. Bieda (2003).

<sup>3</sup> Σωκράτης τῇ μὲν ὀρθῶς ἐζήτει τῇ δ' ἡμάρτανεν, 1144b18-19; cf. también 1144b28 y 1147b15.

<sup>4</sup> Por lo dicho, no pretendo afirmar que Aristóteles no se diferencia en absoluto

## I. EL IS EN EL *PROTÁGORAS*<sup>5</sup>

Tras analizar, por iniciativa de Protágoras, algunos pasajes de un poema de Simónides, Sócrates y el sofista retoman el problema de la valentía y de su relación con el conocimiento. En el análisis que Sócrates hace de ciertos pasajes del poema ya se ha anticipado lo que será uno de los principales intereses del hijo de la partera en el último segmento del diálogo: es imposible que alguien obre de buen grado contra lo que considera mejor para sí mismo.

Yo, en efecto, estoy casi seguro de esto: ninguno de los varones sabios cree que alguno de los hombres se equivoca voluntariamente o realiza cosas vergonzosas y malas voluntariamente, sino que saben bien que todos los que hacen cosas vergonzosas y malas <las> hacen involuntariamente. (345d9-e4)<sup>6</sup>

Para Sócrates, equivocarse no implica algo moralmente negativo, sino una desviación respecto del curso deseado, desviación debida a una falla cognitiva, no moral: si se yerra, es porque se desconocía el curso de acción verdaderamente deseado: lo que se creía mejor resultó peor que otra alternativa mejor entre las posibles, pero que se desconocía en el momento de actuar. Este agente no es malo, sino ignorante. El punto central es, pues, el rol del conocimiento en la toma de decisiones:

¿Cómo estás, <Protágoras>, en relación con el conocimiento?  
¿Acaso también a vos, como a la mayoría de los hombres, te

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de la posición socrática —algo, por lo demás, obvio—, sino que no lo hace *en lo que respecta a los términos en los que el propio Sócrates la planteó*. Una vez sumado su propio andamiaje conceptual, Aristóteles sí se distancia de múltiples maneras de la concepción socrática del error moral, tanto en lo que hace a su concepción —teoría psíquica y de la acción— como a sus consecuencias morales.

<sup>5</sup> No me extiendo más allá del *Protágoras* para hacer una presentación del IS porque, como mostraré más adelante, es comúnmente aceptado que es a partir de este diálogo que Aristóteles reconstruye el pensamiento socrático.

<sup>6</sup> Todas las traducciones de los textos griegos son mías.

parece esto o <te parece que es> de otro modo? Acerca de conocimiento, la mayoría opina algo de esta clase: que no es ni algo fuerte, ni capaz de guiar, ni capaz de gobernar. No piensan, acerca de él, que es algo así, sino que, cuando a menudo el conocimiento está presente en un hombre, no lo gobierna el conocimiento, sino algo diferente: a veces el impulso-pasional, a veces el placer, a veces el dolor, otras veces el amor y a menudo el miedo. <Y opinan esto> por pensar sin pericia acerca del conocimiento, tal como <lo harían> acerca de un prisionero-de-guerra, arrastrado en derredor por todas esas cosas (ἀτεχνῶς διανοούμενοι περὶ τῆς ἐπιστήμης ὥσπερ περὶ ἀνδραπόδου, περιελκομένης ὑπὸ τῶν ἄλλων πάντων). Entonces, acerca del conocimiento, ¿acaso también a vos te parece que es algo de esa clase? ¿O <te parece> que es algo noble y capaz de gobernar al hombre, y que toda vez que alguien conozca las cosas buenas y las malas no podría ser dominado por nada —de modo de hacer otra cosa distinta a la que el conocimiento ordenase—, sino que la sensatez sería suficiente para auxiliar al hombre? (352b1-c7)

En pocas líneas Sócrates presenta los postulados básicos de su teoría de la acción.<sup>7</sup> Para la mayoría, que considera al conocimiento débil e incapaz de gobernar al hombre, la ἐπιστήμη es un prisionero-de-guerra (ἀνδραπόδον).<sup>8</sup> Sócrates, por el contrario, opina que el conocimiento es algo noble que *siempre* gobierna al hombre. El problema no es, así, que existen hombres que obran vencidos por las pasiones que esclavizan el conocimiento, sino que existen hombres que creen que algo es bueno cuando, en realidad, no lo es. Se trata de hombres equivocados que no saben que lo están. Porque no es solo el conocimiento —verdadero por definición— aquello conforme lo cual se elige, sino también la opinión, la creencia, que puede resultar tanto verdadera como

<sup>7</sup> Para la distinción entre ética y teoría de la acción socráticas sigo a Gómez-Lobo (1998, p. 31); cf. Vigo (2002) y Gulley (1965, p. 86).

<sup>8</sup> El término ἀνδραπόδον es de uso realmente escaso en Platón, pues aparece no más de diez veces en el *corpus* (frente a δοῦλος, con centenaras de apariciones). Este dato meramente estadístico es, no obstante, central para fundamentar el uso aristotélico del mismo término en *EN* VII.

falsa, pero solo desde la perspectiva de una tercera persona, pues el agente siempre cree que eso que hace es lo mejor que puede hacer dadas sus circunstancias:<sup>9</sup> “Nadie, ni mientras sabe ni mientras está creyendo que existen otras cosas mejores que las que hace —y <que son> posibles de hacer—, hace estas cosas si es posible hacer las mejores” (358b7-c1).<sup>10</sup>

Pero a esto hay que agregar una última cuestión, fundamental para la interpretación y crítica aristotélicas que veremos en lo que sigue: en la matriz intelectualista socrática, “ignorante” no es quien no sabe nada —pues *todo* agente humano está constituido por una matriz epistémica determinada, compuesta ya sea por conocimientos, ya sea por opiniones (mayormente por una combinación de ambas cosas)—, sino quien cree que sabe algo que, en realidad, no sabe.<sup>11</sup> Como consecuencia de esto, ocurre que *en toda decisión práctica hay un contenido proposicional disponible para el agente, contenido proposicional conforme el cual decide*. Más allá de que se trate de un conocimiento o una opinión, más allá de que, si se trata de una opinión, sea verdadera o falsa, un agente socrático siempre hace lo que racionalmente considera lo mejor para sí mismo en las circunstancias y posibilidades materiales dadas. Esto implica que, una vez que se ha adoptado determinada opinión en torno a

<sup>9</sup> Para la irrelevancia práctica de la distinción entre conocimiento y opinión en el IS, cf. Bieda (2011). Para esto mismo en Aristóteles, cf. Robinson (1977, pp. 79-80) y Broadie (1991, p. 274).

<sup>10</sup> Cf. 358c-d.

<sup>11</sup> “¿Y qué? ¿Acaso <ustedes, la mayoría de los hombres> llaman ‘ignorancia’ (ἀμαθία) a algo como esto: a tener una opinión falsa y a engañarse-con-mentiras (ἐψεῦσθαι) acerca de asuntos muy valiosos?” (358c). La ignorancia no es la simple carencia de conocimientos; de hecho, el hombre nunca carece de cosas *que considera* conocimientos, siempre se halla en un estado epistémico determinado. Y ese es, justamente, el problema que interesa a Sócrates: que en la mayoría de los casos ese conocimiento no es realmente tal, sino que es mera δόξα que, de ser verdadera, revertirá en un buen y placentero curso de acción, mas, de ser falsa —lo cual implica que el agente es un “ignorante”—, conducirá a cursos de acción malos y dolorosos. El problema de la δόξα no es, pues, su *status* epistemológico degradado respecto del conocimiento, sino que, así como puede conducir a buenos cursos de acción, también puede conducir por la senda contraria. Cf. *Banq.* 204a.

una cuestión práctica, esa opinión habrá de operar toda vez que el agente se encuentre en una situación práctica vinculada con ella. Es imposible, en este marco, dar la espalda a las propias creencias o conocimientos.<sup>12</sup> Un texto del *Protágoras* es contundente en este sentido (314a1-b4):

Existe, por cierto, un peligro mucho mayor en la compra de aprendizajes que en la compra de alimentos. Porque es posible separar en distintas vasijas los alimentos y bebidas comprados al traficante y al comerciante y, antes de recibirlos en el cuerpo, cuando se los toma o se los come, se puede pedir consejo tras depositarlos en la casa [...]. Pero no es posible apartar los aprendizajes en otra vasija, sino que, tras depositar el pago luego de recibir el aprendizaje en el alma misma —esto es: tras haber aprendido—, es necesidad salir dañado o beneficiado (*ἀλλ' ἀνάγκη καταθέντα τὴν τιμὴν τὸ μάθημα ἐν αὐτῇ τῇ ψυχῇ λαβόντα καὶ μαθόντα ἀπιέναι ἢ βεβλαμμένον ἢ ὠφελημένον*).<sup>13</sup>

Una vez adquirido, lo aprendido —sean conocimientos, sean opiniones— guía indefectiblemente las acciones. Si dicho aprendizaje es genuino, si es *ἐπιστήμη*, entonces el hombre saldrá beneficiado; pero si no es genuino, entonces puede darse el caso —si su opinión es falsa— de que obre mal y resulte perjudicado. Allí radica la verdadera preocupación socrática frente a la sofística: partiendo del supuesto de que el hombre se halla sometido a lo que su repertorio epistémico le ordena, la batalla decisiva es *previa* al momento en que se aprende, dado que, una vez obtenido, el aprendizaje no puede sino operar de manera efectiva en las decisiones. Este último punto resultará fundamental para mi interpretación de la crítica aristotélica.

<sup>12</sup> De allí que, consecuentemente, sea imposible actuar de manera incontinente.

<sup>13</sup> No se debe perder de vista que en el pasaje citado Sócrates está dando cuenta de la extrema peligrosidad de la actividad docente de los sofistas al proporcionar ‘conocimientos’ que, una vez presentes en el alma, operarán de hecho en la vida práctica de los hombres sin que estos tengan la posibilidad efectiva de revisarlos antes de actuar.

Es por todo esto que Sócrates concluía, en 352c, que la sensatez (φρόνησις) es suficiente para auxiliar al hombre, pues el mal se debe a una falla epistémica del agente, no a una falla vinculada con su querer: se trata de una falla *cognitiva*, no *volitiva*. El querer nunca falla, siempre se dirige hacia lo que se sabe o se considera bueno; la falla puede producirse en lo que el agente tiene por “bueno” y “malo”, pero no en sus ansias de realizarlo:

*toda vez que un agente elige algo, y precisamente en la medida en que lo elige, lo elige por considerarlo al mismo tiempo como bueno [...] El fin de una acción, en tanto objeto del deseo que motiva la producción de dicha acción, es intencionado siempre al mismo tiempo como un bien. (Vigo, 2002, p. 70)*

Este modo de comprender la génesis de la acción supone, evidentemente, un alma monolíticamente cerrada sobre la racionalidad. Si bien el Sócrates platónico no tematiza cuestiones vinculadas con particiones internas del alma,<sup>14</sup> su nomologismo se infiere de la matriz intelectualista. El propio Aristóteles —o el autor de los *Magna moralia*— parece haberlo entendido así:

<Sócrates>, en efecto, hacía conocimientos de las virtudes. Pero es imposible que esto sea así, pues todos los conocimientos vienen acompañados de razón, y la razón se da en la parte intelectual del alma. Por lo tanto, todas las virtudes surgen, de acuerdo con él <sc. Sócrates>, en la parte razonadora del alma. Al hacer de las virtudes conocimientos, le ocurre que elimina la parte irracional del alma y, haciendo esto, elimina también la pasión y el carácter. En conclusión: no captó correctamente las virtudes en este sentido. (MM 1.1.7.3-11)

La supresión de toda forma de irracionalidad en la génesis de la acción, consecuente con el carácter mono-lógico del alma, da

<sup>14</sup> Gosling (1990, p. 39) habla de “Socrates’ monolithic account of human motivation”. Para este tema, cf. Bieda (2012).



lugar, según Aristóteles, a una concepción de la moralidad que solo involucra componentes cognitivos, sin lugar para aspectos emocionales que pueden interferir en la toma de decisiones.

Sobre la base de lo visto hasta aquí, veamos a continuación un aspecto puntual de la crítica aristotélica al IS en *EN VII*.

## II. LA CRÍTICA ARISTOTÉLICA

### a) La “extraña” concepción socrática de la incontinencia

Pasemos ahora a hacer una sucinta reconstrucción de la crítica aristotélica al IS en *EN VII*, pero no en su totalidad, sino en función de un aspecto específico.<sup>15</sup> Para ello me concentraré principalmente en dos pasajes. En primer lugar, veamos aquel en el que Aristóteles presenta y critica preliminarmente la posición socrática:

Se podría plantear la siguiente dificultad: de qué modo comprende correctamente <lo mejor> alguien que actúa de manera incontinente.<sup>16</sup> Algunos, por cierto, dicen que no es posible <actuar de ese modo> si se tiene conocimiento, pues es extraño (δαινόν), como creía Sócrates, que, si el conocimiento está presente, gobierne otra cosa y lo arrastre como a un prisionero-de-guerra (ἄλλο τι κρατεῖν καὶ περιέλκειν αὐτὴν ὥσπερ ἀνδράποδον). Sócrates, en efecto, combatía por completo contra este argumento, bajo el supuesto de que no hay incontinencia. Porque creía que

<sup>15</sup> Es por demás voluminosa la bibliografía que ha tratado este tema en *EN VII*, por lo que resultaría obsoleto o arbitrario citar una selección de los textos más relevantes.

<sup>16</sup> ἀπορήσειε δ' ἂν τις πῶς ὑπολαμβάνων ὀρθῶς ἀκρατεῖται τις. En esta primera oración de *EN VII*, 2 se cifra gran parte de la discusión que se dará a continuación. Lo fundamental aquí es que el adverbio modal interrogativo πῶς no debe ser tomado, como usualmente ocurre en las traducciones publicadas de *EN* (v.g. Pallí Bonet (1985) y Sinnott (2007); también Joachim (1962) y Gauthier-Jolif (1970)), con ἀκρατεῖται, sino con ὑπολαμβάνων: Aristóteles no está preguntando por el modo en que actúa de manera incontinente quien tiene una comprensión correcta de lo mejor, sino de qué modo tiene una comprensión correcta de lo mejor quien actúa de manera incontinente. Eso es lo que se discutirá en lo que sigue del libro VII, en primer lugar, en relación con Sócrates. Cf. Dahl (1984, p. 163) y Vigo (1999, p. 63, nota 3).

ὑπολαμβάνω y ὑπόληψις remiten de modo general al conocimiento: ciencia, prudencia y opinión; cf. *DA* 427b23-26 y Sinnott (2007, nota 1003).

nadie que posee una comprensión general actúa en contra de lo mejor, a no ser por ignorancia. (1145b21-27)

De este pasaje cabe destacar, ante todo, el enlace casi explícito que establece con el texto citado *supra* del *Protágoras* (352b-c), dado el uso de los términos *περιέλκω* y *ἀνδράποδον*. Al tratarse de términos poco usuales en Platón y en Aristóteles, resulta plausible sospechar que el estagirita está pensando en el IS tal como lo conocemos por el *Protágoras* platónico.<sup>17</sup> Si bien esto no aporta pruebas concluyentes, sí me permite suponer con cierta verosimilitud que Aristóteles tiene en mente una versión del IS tal como la que analicé en el párrafo anterior.

Pero lo que fundamentalmente me interesa del pasaje es el hecho de que Aristóteles califique de *δεινόν* la afirmación socrática según la cual, si el conocimiento está presente, puede gobernar otra cosa que no sea él.

El adjetivo *δεινός* aparece con cierta frecuencia en el *corpus*, en principio con tres significados: (i) En referencia a algo “temible”; (ii) en referencia a alguien “hábil” o “diestro”; (iii) en referencia a algo “moralmente rechazable”.<sup>18</sup> Si bien estos tres usos se hallan presentes en *EN*,<sup>19</sup> lo cierto es que ninguno de ellos parece adecuado sin más para el pasaje recién citado. En efecto, Aristóteles no parece estar diciendo que el hecho de que el conocimiento sea gobernado por las pasiones sea algo *δεινόν*, ni (i) porque da miedo, ni (ii) porque es algo hábil, ni (iii) porque es algo moralmente rechazable. Y esto porque, como vimos en el primer apartado,

<sup>17</sup> Así opinan también Gautier-Jolif (1970, *ad loc.*), Joachim (1962, *ad loc.*) y, más recientemente, Cooper (2009, p. 36). Aristóteles utiliza el término *ἀνδράποδον* en el *corpus* apenas una decena de veces, frente a las más de ciento cincuenta que utiliza *δοῦλος*; mientras que son menos de cinco las apariciones del verbo *περιέλκω*.

<sup>18</sup> (i) *V.g.* *DA* 427b21; *EE* 1230a16; *Poet.* 1453b30; *Pol.* 1316b20; *Probl.* 916b37, 948a18; *Ret.* 1382b7; cf. Bonitz *ad loc.* (ii) *V.g.* *MM* 2.6.44.2; *Pol.* 1274a26, 1305a12; *Ret.* 1373a5; *Poét.* 1454a24; este es el sentido técnico que subraya Bonitz *ad loc.* (iii) *V.g.* *Pol.* 1255a9; *Probl.* 951a11, 951b6; *Ret.* 1377a24.

<sup>19</sup> (i) 1103b16, 1110a27; (ii) 1144a27, 1146a23, 1152a10, 1158a32; (iii) 1160a5.

Sócrates afirma que esa clase de situación es *imposible*. Ni temible, ni hábil, ni moralmente rechazable (pues, en ese caso, aunque rechazable, sería posible): imposible.

En el caso de (i) ocurre que, como técnicamente se define en *Retórica* II.5, el miedo surge ante la posibilidad de que aquello por lo que se teme nos afecte a nosotros mismos.<sup>20</sup> Pero si la ἀκρασία socrática no es posible, mal podríamos temerle, pues no podría ocurrirnos. En cuanto a (ii), evidentemente sería un contrasentido, dado el contexto. En el caso de (iii) ocurre algo similar a (i): Aristóteles no está criticando la concepción socrática de la ἀκρασία por considerarla moralmente rechazable, sino el hecho de que el hijo de la partera niegue toda posibilidad de que ocurra. ¿A qué se puede estar refiriendo Aristóteles, entonces, cuando califica de δεινόν la incontinencia tal como la entendía Sócrates?

Más allá de los sentidos de δεινόν relevados en el *corpus*, existe otro bastante difundido en la literatura griega clásica que, si bien soslayado por Bonitz, entiendo que es el adecuado aquí. Se trata de situaciones tan extraordinarias, tan fuera de lo habitual, que resultan “asombrosas” (toda vez que sean posibles) o, en caso de extrema inverosimilitud, “extrañas” en el sentido de “imposibles”.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Cf. 1382b26-1383a13. En *Ret.* 1386a22 se traza la diferencia entre lo δεινόν y lo digno de compasión (ἐλεεινόν). Algo δεινόν es *v.g.* cuando vemos que alguien va a matar a nuestro hijo, mientras que lo digno de compasión es algo que podría pasarnos a nosotros mismos (*v.g.* cuando vemos a un amigo nuestro que pide limosna): “esto último es digno de compasión, mientras que aquello es terrible; lo terrible, en efecto, es distinto de lo digno de compasión y es tal que expulsa a la piedad y a menudo es útil para lo contrario <a la piedad>, porque ya no sienten compasión cuando lo terrible está a su lado” (*Ret.* 1386a22-25). Si el φόβος se siente ante la posibilidad de que lo que le ocurre a otro me ocurra a mí mismo y el ἔλεος, por su parte, se siente por un otro al que le ocurre algo que, en principio, no nos está pasando a nosotros, lo δεινόν aquí parece ser una combinación exacerbada de ambas cosas, por fuera de toda racionalidad: sentimos lo δεινόν ante un hecho de extrema gravedad que, si bien le ocurre a otro, nos genera un estado. Esto ocurre porque lo terrible exagera pasionalmente el miedo: “toda vez que <los apetitos> son grandes y fuertes, expulsan/repenen al razonamiento” (*EN* 1119b9-10).

<sup>21</sup> Ejemplos de situaciones calificadas de “extrañas” por lindar con la imposibilidad se pueden ver *v.g.* en Platón, *Eutidemo* 298c; Eurípides, *Hécuba* 592; Sófocles,

Esto último sería, propongo, lo que Aristóteles está mentando al calificar de δεινόν la concepción socrática de la ἀκρασία: no algo “temible”, no algo “censurable”, sino algo “extraño”, es decir: “inverosímil”, “asomboroso” y, a la postre, “imposible”.<sup>22</sup>

Como se ve —y como concluiré hacia el final del trabajo—, Aristóteles no critica a Sócrates que su modo de concebir la incontinencia discrepe con la realidad, pues, como intentaré mostrar en lo que sigue, tampoco para Aristóteles puede ocurrir lo que Sócrates decía. La crítica radica en que Sócrates no supo ver que existe *otro modo* de concebir la incontinencia que sí es posible, en función de una redefinición de lo que se entiende por “saber” e “ignorar”.<sup>23</sup>

## b) Los dos modos de conocer

Este otro modo de concebir la incontinencia se basa, en primer lugar, en una distinción entre dos formas en las que se puede afirmar que alguien “conoce” y, por lo tanto, que “ignora”: o bien utilizando tal conocimiento cuando se actúa, o bien teniéndolo, pero sin utilizarlo cuando se actúa.

Áyax 1127. Cf. también Esquilo, *Prom.* 39 y *Siete contra Tebas* 1036; Sófocles, *Trag.* 298 y Platón, *Teet.* 169c.

<sup>22</sup> En palabras de Gosling (1990): “Si bien Aristóteles podría haber pensado que los acráticos son ‘terribles’, parece más natural considerar que está descartando esta posibilidad <sc. esta clase de incontinencia en la que se está utilizando el conocimiento>” (p. 31; traducción mía). Algunas traducciones publicadas de δεινόν en este pasaje son *strange* (Ross, 1925 [1975]) *shocking* (Hardie, 1968), *strange* (Dahl, 1984) “absurdo” (Pallí Bonet, 1985), *strano* (Natali, 1999), “astonishing” (Rowe-Broadie, 2002), “extraño” (Sinnot, 2007), *terrible* (Reeve, 2014).

<sup>23</sup> Ya Kenny (1979, p.160) había llamado la atención sobre la relevancia de la redefinición del hecho de “saber” para dar cuenta del acuerdo que existe entre Sócrates y Aristóteles: “con vistas a reconciliar su acuerdo con Sócrates con su acuerdo con la opinión popular <conforme la cual la incontinencia es posible>, Aristóteles necesita distinguir diferentes grados de posesión y ejercicio de conocimiento”. En una línea similar, Vigo (1999, p. 67): “Aristóteles desplaza el eje de la discusión: la posibilidad de la incontinencia no remite, como Sócrates creía, a la oposición entre saber genuino e ignorancia, sino a la diferencia entre saber actual o explícito y saber potencial o latente”.

Dado que decimos “conocer” en dos sentidos —se dice que “conoce” el que tiene <conocimiento> y no lo utiliza, pero también el que lo utiliza— será diferente hacer lo que no se debe teniendo <conocimiento de ello> sin ejercerlo y <teniendo conocimiento de ello> ejerciéndolo. Esto último parece extraño (δεινόν), pero no <parece extraño> si <se hace lo que no se debe teniendo el conocimiento> sin ejercerlo. (1146b31-35)

La distinción entre dos modos de conocer es central: se puede poseer conocimiento y ya (ἔχειν), o se puede poseer conocimiento y utilizarlo o ejercerlo al momento de actuar (ἔχειν + χρῆσθαι = θεωρεῖν).<sup>24</sup> Nótese que Aristóteles afirma que es posible actuar de manera incontinente cuando se posee el conocimiento relevante para el caso sin servirse de él al momento de actuar: “decir que alguien conoce algo no es decir que esté siempre pensando en ello, ni que esté pensando en ello ahora”.<sup>25</sup> Sin embargo, *descarta explícitamente* la posibilidad de una acción incontinente cuando, además de poseer el conocimiento, el agente está disponiendo de él al momento de actuar. Eso sería “extraño” (δεινόν), mismo adjetivo que, según vimos, se adjudicaba a la posibilidad de una acción incontinente al modo socrático. La razón por la que esto sería extraño es obvia: se trataría de una persona que cree firmemente que lo que está a punto de hacer le hará daño, que afirma dicha creencia en el momento en que está por hacerlo, y que no existe ningún factor externo que lo obligue a realizarlo o le impida evitarlo. Si, no obstante, lo hace, estaríamos frente a alguien “extraño”, “asombroso”, cercano, quizás, a la locura.<sup>26</sup> Aristóteles considera que una decisión semejante,

<sup>24</sup> Con claridad conceptual, Vigo (1999, p. 67) denomina cada tipo de conocimiento “saber explícito” y “saber latente”, respectivamente.

Para la distinción entre “tener” y “utilizar” el conocimiento, cf. *Teeteto* 197a-198a, donde Platón utiliza el verbo κερτῆσθαι en lugar del χρῆσθαι de Aristóteles. Para θεωρεῖν en tanto ejercicio en acto del conocimiento en oposición al conocimiento que simplemente se posee, cf. *Met.* 1043a34-35, *Fis.* 255a34-b2 y los pasajes de *DA* que comento en el siguiente párrafo del trabajo.

<sup>25</sup> Robinson (1977, p. 80; traducción mía)

<sup>26</sup> Con respecto a la distinción entre conocimiento y opinión verdadera en la

en semejantes circunstancias epistémicas y materiales, sería, sin dudas, extraña, quizás porque “nadie, ni mientras sabe ni mientras está creyendo que existen otras cosas mejores que las que hace —y <que son> posibles de hacer—, hace estas cosas si es posible hacer las mejores” (*Prot.* 358b7-c1).

Volviendo a la distinción entre dos modos de conocer, Aristóteles revela allí su propio intelectualismo, pues, en sentido estricto, siempre que se actúa se pone en juego un conocimiento u opinión vinculado con lo decidido. Uno de los ejemplos aristotélicos señala aquella situación en la que conviven en el agente dos opiniones universales (καθόλου δόξαι, 1147a25) contrapuestas: una que afirma que “hay que probar todo lo dulce” (παντὸς γλυκεὸς γεύεσθαι δεῖ, 1147a29) y otra, también universal, que “prohíbe gustar <lo dulce>” (ἡ μὲν καθόλου κωλύουσα γεύεσθαι, 1147a31) y, en esa circunstancia, aparece frente al agente un particular dulce. ¿Qué querría decir, en un caso como este, “utilizar el conocimiento”, desde el momento en que tanto probar lo dulce como no probarlo parecen responder a opiniones que el agente posee? Podemos hallar una respuesta en *Primeros analíticos*:

Nada impide que el que sabe que A se da en el conjunto de B y que, a su vez, este se da en el conjunto de C, crea que A no se da en C; v. g. sabe que toda mula es estéril y que esto es una mula, pero cree que ella está preñada. No sabe que A se da en C por no teorizar-conjuntamente (συνθεωρεῖν) lo conforme a cada una <de las proposiciones> [...]. Por lo tanto, nada impide saber y

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acción incontinente (*EN* 1146b8 y ss.) Aristóteles afirma que no resulta relevante a los fines de la discusión, dado que, cuando de decidir un curso de acción se trata, lo que opera es la firme convicción del agente, ya sea que se funde en un conocimiento o en una opinión: “Aristóteles argumenta que no tiene sentido insistir en la distinción entre conocimiento y opinión verdadera, puesto la dificultad surge de la firmeza de la convicción. El resultado de esto es que podemos encarar el asunto como una dificultad vinculada con el conocimiento, pero lo que tengamos que decir sobre él se debe aplicar también a la firme convicción” (Gosling, 1990, p. 26; traducción mía). Como vimos, Sócrates sostiene una posición similar respecto de la irrelevancia de esta distinción a los fines de la acción; cf. Bieda (2011).

estar equivocado en relación con lo mismo. (67a33-b6, con un intervalo)

En situaciones prácticas en las que hay más de un conocimiento universal en juego, “teorizar” el conocimiento, “ejercerlo” en la práctica (θεωρεῖν), significa enlazar conjuntamente dos premisas con vistas a la conclusión práctica.<sup>27</sup>

Veamos, a continuación, algunas precisiones respecto de estos dos modos de concebir el rol del conocimiento al momento de actuar con el objetivo de mostrar cómo, para Aristóteles, no es posible actuar en contra de un conocimiento del que se dispone al momento de decidir, por lo que una incontinencia tal como la rechazada por Sócrates en el *Protágoras* también quedaría descartada.

### c) Modos de poseer y de utilizar el conocimiento en *De anima*

En *DA* II 1, luego de definir el alma como la ἐντελέχεια de un cuerpo potencialmente vivo, se dice que el término ἐντελέχεια puede entenderse de dos maneras:<sup>28</sup> como se entiende el conocimiento (ἐπιστήμη) o como se entiende la acción de estar ejerciendo/teorizando tal conocimiento (τὸ θεωρεῖν).<sup>29</sup> El hombre nace ignorante

<sup>27</sup> Dado que mi objetivo en este trabajo es discutir la posición aristotélica frente a la concepción socrática de la ἀκρασία en relación con el par “poseer conocimiento” - “utilizar el conocimiento”, primera solución al problema propuesta por Aristóteles, no me voy a detener más allá en el llamado “silogismo práctico”, la segunda solución propuesta. La seriedad y centralidad de aquella primera solución en la que me centro ha sido destacada suficientemente por Robinson (1977, pp. 84-85). No obstante, para una presentación detallada del rol del silogismo práctico en este problema, cf. Joachim (1962, *ad loc.*) y la discusión en Hardie (1968, pp. 284-285) y Gosling (1990, ch. III).

<sup>28</sup> Según Shields (2016, nota *ad loc.*), “actuality is spoken of [...] as coming in two grades”, mientras que Hamlyn (1968, *ad* 412a6) habla de que “matter is potentiality, while form is actuality, and that in two ways: first as knowledge is, and second as contemplation is”.

<sup>29</sup> Es compleja la traducción del infinitivo θεωρεῖν al castellano. Lo que no se puede descuidar, dado aquello que Aristóteles pretende ejemplificar con la analogía, es el aspecto durativo de la acción mentada en tiempo presente: no se trata de la acción de “teorizar” en abstracto, sino del hecho fáctico y presente de estar teorizando.

en acto, pero conocedor en potencia. Esta potencia originaria se actualiza en una primera entelequia cuando el hombre adquiere conocimiento. Ahora bien, poseer (ἔχειν) conocimiento no es lo mismo que ejercerlo en la práctica,<sup>30</sup> razón por la cual esta entelequia primera coincide, a su vez, con una segunda potencia consistente en la posibilidad de ejercer dicho conocimiento, de ponerlo en acción.<sup>31</sup> Esta potencia segunda se actualiza, eventualmente, en una segunda entelequia cuando el conocedor ejerce su saber (θεωρεῖν). Aplicado esto a terreno práctico, al igual que en el caso de quien posee la virtud pero no la practica —por ejemplo, por estar durmiendo—, se llama “conocedor” a quien posee el conocimiento, pero ello no implica que se trate de alguien que lo está ejerciendo en acto: “la vigilia es análoga a la acción de teorizar, mientras que el sueño es análogo a tener <el conocimiento> pero no actualizarlo/ejercitarlo” (DA 412a25-26).<sup>32</sup>

La analogía de la enseñanza/aprendizaje para dar cuenta de estas dos clases de actualidad es explotada por Aristóteles en otros textos en los que también está discutiendo los conceptos de

Boeri traduce “ejercicio [del conocimiento]” (2010, *ad loc.*); Calvo Martínez (2000, *ad loc.*) “acto de teorizar”; Hamlyn (1968, *ad loc.*) *contemplation*; Dahl (1984, p. 140) *exercise*; Polanski (2007, p. 149) *thinking* y *theorizing*; Shields (2016, *ad loc.*) “*contemplating*”; Tricot (1947, *ad loc.*) *exercise de la science*”.

<sup>30</sup> Para el caso de conocimientos teóricos: elaborarlo o desarrollarlo; para el caso de conocimientos prácticos: actuar.

<sup>31</sup> Aristóteles no nombra como “primera” y “segunda” a estas dos clases o grados de actualidad y potencialidad; seguimos, no obstante, la opción de numerosos especialistas al respecto (v. g. “Aristóteles sugiere, aunque no lo diga explícitamente, que el mero conocer es un *acto primero*, mientras que la contemplación activa es un *acto segundo*” (Shields, 2016, nota *ad loc.*), quienes, a su vez, se apoyan en la nomenclatura escolástica para estos temas: *potentia prima*, *potentia secunda*, *actus prior*, *actus secundus*.

<sup>32</sup> ἀνάλογον δ’ ἡ μὲν ἐγρήγορσις τῷ θεωρεῖν, ὁ δ’ ὕπνος τῷ ἔχειν καὶ μὴ ἐνεργεῖν. En contexto ético, el verbo “ἐνεργέω” es el que se aplica a quien *ejercita* la virtud y, así, la felicidad: cf. EN 1101a15. La analogía aquí señalada complica la clasificación de Kenny (1979, pp. 160-161) en *cuatro* clases de conocimiento en lugar de tres: ausente, medio-presente (*half-present*), presente y operativo, porque el presente pasaje de DA asimila sin más el conocimiento “medio-presente” (poseído, pero durmiendo) con el tener pero no utilizar y el “presente” (poseído pero despierto, aunque no utilizado) con el operativo.



acto y potencia. En *Metafísica*, ya establecida la famosa máxima conforme la cual “señal distintiva del que sabe y del que no sabe es su capacidad de enseñar” (981b7), se precisa cuál es esa señal (σημείον) de que alguien ha aprendido:

Los que enseñan creen haber dado cuenta de su meta cuando han mostrado <al alumno> actuando/ejercitando (ἐνεργοῦντα) <conforme lo aprendido> [...]. Porque, si esto no es así, entonces el alumno será como el Hermes de Pausón: no es claro, por cierto, si el conocimiento está dentro o fuera de él. (1050a17-21)<sup>33</sup>

El único signo indudable de que el conocimiento ha sido incorporado por el alumno es el ejercicio actual y presente de dicho conocimiento. Y eso por una razón que resulta fundamental para mi trabajo: la clase de ἐπιστήμη que un maestro enseña es una mera capacidad (δύναμις), capacidad que quien ha aprendido puede o no llevar a la práctica, ejercer, teorizar. Retomando los dos aspectos del conocer en *De anima* II, el maestro tan solo actualiza la potencia primera de quien no sabe, brindándole un conocimiento que, en tanto acto de esa potencia primera, constituye, a su vez, la potencia segunda de su ejercicio: “recién cuando uno ve al alumno activo puede decir si el conocimiento ha sido transferido a él: si el conocimiento ha sido internalizado por el alumno o si el alumno está meramente siendo guiado por el conocimiento que permanece externo a él”.<sup>34</sup> Nuevamente, la puesta en práctica es el objetivo último del desarrollo epistémico.

Pero volvamos a *De anima*, donde Aristóteles va todavía un paso más allá. En II 5 (417a22 y ss.) precisa que un hombre puede ser considerado “conocedor” (ἐπιστήμων) en tres sentidos: (i) en el sentido en que conocer es una capacidad del hombre *qua* hombre —esto es: el hombre se halla entre los seres capaces de conocer—;

<sup>33</sup> El Hermes de Pausón habría sido una estatua que, por su forma y disposición, parecía, o bien salir de un bloque, o bien estar inserta en él; cf. Makin (2006, *ad loc.*).

<sup>34</sup> Makin (2006, *ad Met.* 1050a17-21).

(ii) en el sentido en que llamamos “conocedor” a quien posee un conocimiento. Antes de pasar a la tercera alternativa, Aristóteles aclara lo siguiente:

Cada uno de estos dos es capaz <de conocer>, pero no de la misma manera, sino que el primero <es capaz de conocer> porque el género que le es propio es tal <que se lo permite>, al igual que su materia; el segundo, en cambio, porque es capaz de teorizar si así lo quiso (βουλευθεὶς δυνατός θεωρεῖν), a menos que algo externo se lo impida. (417a26-28)<sup>35</sup>

La precisión “si lo quiso” (βουλευθεὶς) es clave para mi hipótesis, porque asigna un rol principal al querer de un agente que se halla en acto primero/potencia segunda: además de poseer conocimiento, puede, suponiendo que no existe un impedimento externo, querer o no querer disponer de él en una situación práctica concreta. El participio de aoristo sugiere, además, cierto orden temporal de los eventos: *primero*, tiene que querer; *luego*, ejerce el conocimiento. Allí radica la diferencia esencial con la primera clase de conocedor, que lo es tan solo porque su constitución material le permite serlo: ningún ser humano puede *no querer* ser conocedor en potencia primera y, por no quererlo, dejar de serlo, pues dejaría de ser humano: todo ser humano puede, por definición, saber algo.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Sobre este tema, Polanski (2007) afirma que “la actualidad de quien aprende no es actualidad completa como la de la disposición desarrollada de la persona pasible de conocimiento; alguien que todavía no sabe algo difícilmente pueda estar utilizando *este* conocimiento, incluso si está utilizando otro conocimiento en su esfuerzo por adquirir el primero” (p.159; traducción mía. El destacado es del original). Cf. EN 1177a32-b1: “el sabio puede teorizar incluso estando <solo> consigo mismo, y cuanto más sabio fuere, más <podrá teorizar>; quizás es mejor si tiene colegas, pero, de cualquier modo, es el más autárquico <de los hombres>”. Aquí se ve, pues, que este sabio ha actualizado la primera potencia y la segunda potencia: no trata de quien meramente *puede* teorizar, sino quien *está de hecho teorizando*.

<sup>36</sup> Por el contrario, cualquier ser humano podría no querer volverse conocedor en acto primero (y potencia segunda): bastaría con que no estudie y permanecerá en la potencia primera, nunca actualizada.

Con respecto a la posibilidad de que “algo externo” (ἐξωθεν) se lo impida, resulta fundamental tener en cuenta el contexto del pasaje: se está tratando aquí acerca de la senso-percepción que, como tal, solo puede ser impedida por alguna traba externa. No hay nada natural en el ojo que le impida ver, a menos que *v.g.* no haya luz (factor externo). Sin embargo, trasladada la analogía a terreno práctico, bien podría tratarse de un impedimento interno: “el impedimento incluso podría estar dentro de la persona, aunque ajeno a su deseo (*wish*), *e. g.* deseos (*desires*) conflictivos”.<sup>37</sup> El caso de quien conoce lo mejor pero, impedido por su deseo interno, no lo lleva a la práctica sería el del incontinente.

El tercer tipo de conocedor se define como sigue (417a28-29): “el que ya está teorizando, que está en acto y conociendo en sentido propio que ‘esto es la letra A’ (ὁ δ’ ἤδη θεωρῶν, ἐντελεχεία ὧν καὶ κυρίως ἐπιστάμενος τόδε τὸ Α)”. Cabe destacar aquí dos cosas: primero, que se define a este tercer conocedor en términos de una actividad que se desarrolla actual y realmente, cosas ambas mentadas por el aspecto durativo de los participios de tiempo presente —ya no de aoristo, como en el caso anterior— y por el dativo adverbial ἐντελεχεία: no se trata de quien tiene la mera capacidad/posibilidad de conocer si así lo quiso —segundo de los casos anteriores—, sino de quien *está ejerciendo* sus conocimientos materializándolos en una decisión particular. En segundo lugar, y verdaderamente central para mi hipótesis, este hombre es quien, en sentido estricto o propio (κυρίως), conoce, de donde se puede inferir que los otros dos conocedores son tales, pero no en sentido propio, sino en un sentido que llamaré “derivado”.<sup>38</sup> Más adelante retomaré este punto.

<sup>37</sup> Polanski (2007, p. 232, nota 14). El mismo Polanski señala que “Aristóteles desea ser ambiguo respecto de si está tratando con conocimiento teórico o práctico”.

<sup>38</sup> Quizás sea suficiente la diferencia entre conocer en acto primero (en tanto mero “poseer” conocimiento, como quien está dormido; cf. *EN* 1147a11-18; 1147b6-9; 1152a14-15; *De gen. anim.* 735a9-11) y conocer en acto segundo (*hic et nunc*, ejerciendo el conocimiento, θεωρεῖν) como para hablar de cierta homonimia entre las distintas formas del conocer. No es, evidentemente, una homonimia absoluta, pues hay una referencia única (πρὸς ἓν) en la acción de teorizar/poner en práctica el co-

#### d) La posesión del conocimiento entendida como *ἐξίς*

La distinción entre quien solo posee conocimiento y quien lo está ejerciendo puede asimilarse, en terreno práctico, a la diferencia entre una *ἐξίς* (disposición, hábito) y una *ἐνέργεια* propiamente dicha. Y esto porque, al tratarse de asuntos prácticos, la evaluación moral de un agente no surge de lo que sabe, sino de lo que hace (EN 1103a31-b2). Es por esto que Aristóteles no define la virtud ética como una *ἐνέργεια*, pues en ese caso solo sería virtuoso quien está actuando virtuosamente aquí y ahora, de modo que ni Priamo ni Pericles serían virtuosos mientras duermen, cosa ridícula. La virtud ética es cierta *disposición* a obrar virtuosamente, un hábito o modo de ser virtuoso que dispone el carácter de un agente a (re) accionar de modo moralmente positivo frente a diversos estímulos externos: “Son disposiciones (*ἐξίς*) aquellas cosas conforme las cuales somos buenos o malos en relación con las pasiones; v. g. respecto del encolerizarse, somos malos si actuamos con desmesura o sin cuidado, pero si actuamos mesuradamente, somos buenos” (EN 1105b25-28).

Como decía, la disposición es un modo de ser frente a lo que nos afecta (*πάθη*): quien (re)accione bien, será bueno; quien (re) accione mal, malo. Para dar lugar a esta clase de disposición, no basta con contabilizar una o dos situaciones aisladas. Hablando de las virtudes éticas, Aristóteles ya ha dicho lo siguiente:

Adquirimos las virtudes, ante todo, después de actuar (*ἐνεργήσαντες*), como también ocurre entre las demás artes. Porque lo que hay que hacer luego de aprender (*μαθόντας*), lo aprendemos mientras lo estamos haciendo; v. g. nos volvemos constructores de casas mientras construimos casas y citaristas mientras tocamos la cítara. Del mismo modo, nos volvemos justos mientras hacemos cosas justas... (EN 1103a31-b2)

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nocimiento. No obstante, es solo este último el que se considera conocimiento *stricto sensu* (*κυρίως*).

Son “justos” quienes tienen la disposición a realizar acciones justas. Y estos no son otros que quienes *han realizado* (ἐνεργήσαντες) numerosas acciones justas y, gracias a ello, *han aprendido* (μαθόντας) qué es lo justo y, tras aprenderlo, han querido y podido llevarlo a la práctica.<sup>39</sup> Ahora bien, en el momento en que un agente lleva su ἔξις a la práctica —es decir: cuando está actuando— no es su disposición en tanto potencia lo que está en juego, sino la actualización de esa disposición.

Trasladado esto a lo visto *supra* a propósito de potencias y actos primeros y segundos en *EN* VII y en *DA* II, el concepto de ἔξις puede ser asimilado al de acto primero/potencia segunda,<sup>40</sup> mientras que el de acción virtuosa puede asimilarse al de acto segundo: “el ejercicio efectivo de una *héxis* particular es una actividad; cualquiera de las potencialidades iniciales <sc. las potencias primeras> podría resultar una *héxis* determinada”.<sup>41</sup> La disposición habitual es, pues, cierta clase de posesión no asimilable sin más al ejercicio efectivo de aquello para lo cual dispone: un hombre virtuoso puede, *de facto*, obrar mal, porque la ἔξις no es apodíctica, sino, a lo sumo, asertórica. Después de todo, se trata de humanos, seres contingentes. Así, cada acción motivada por un deseo en la que el agente no se sirvió de conocimientos adversos a dicho deseo —conocimientos que estaban en su posesión— constituye, *stricto sensu*, una acción incontinente, aun cuando su ἔξις sea contraria a lo realizado y dé lugar, generalmente, a acciones motivadas por el conocimiento y no por el deseo. El del incontinente es, pues, un caso de lo que Vigo denomina “disociación interior del ἥθος e ideal de vida”: “el incontinente no ha logrado transformar su

39 Nótese los participios de aoristo.

40 Es decir, al mero hecho de “poseer” (ἔχειν) conocimiento, dando cuenta, así, del vínculo etimológico entre ἔχειν y ἔξις (cf. Chantraine, s.v. ἔχειν).

41 Hamlyn (1968, *ad* 417a21). De modo similar, Hardie (1968) afirma que “cuando Aristóteles habla de ‘uso’ <sc. θεωρεῖν> no se refiere sin más a la aplicación del conocimiento en la práctica, sino al ejercicio de conocimiento disposicional <sc. ἔξις> en el hecho de estar pensando” (p. 274; traducción mía).

ideal de vida en un ἥθος a través del correspondiente proceso de habituación [...]. El incontinente [...]. El incontinente posee un ideal de vida conforme a razón <sc. conocimiento poseído>, pero solo al modo de una representación sin real inserción en su realidad personal <sc. conocimiento no ejercido>”.<sup>42</sup>

Por el contrario, en aquellas acciones que sí actualizan la ἔξις del agente, al momento de estar actuando —esto es, al momento de estar actualizando dicha ἔξις— ya no hay lastres de potencia- lidad, sino que estamos ante la actividad plena de quien responde disposicionalmente a aquello que, en general, hace. Este sería el caso relevado por Sócrates, en el que se actualiza la disposición del agente conforme sus apreciaciones epistémicas de la situa- ción práctica particular. Una situación acrática en el lugar y en el momento en que la propia ἔξις está siendo actualizada sería, sin dudas, “extraña”, tanto para Sócrates como para Aristóteles.

### III. ¿RECHAZA ARISTÓTELES LA CONCEPCIÓN SOCRÁTICA DE LA IN- CONTINENCIA?

Retomemos las distinciones que se hacen en *DA* entre dos modos de conocer: quien conoce, *stricto sensu* (κυρίως, *DA* 417a28), es quien no solo posee el conocimiento, sino quien también lo utiliza/ejercita. A su vez, ya habíamos visto que, en alguien así, la incontinencia no es posible, sino algo δεινόν (*EN* 1146b31-35). Aristóteles niega la posibilidad de la acción incontinente en quienes son conocedores en sentido propio y estricto —i.e. en ejercicio—, debido a que, en esa instancia del actuar, el conflicto interno ya ha sido resuelto: si se está ejerciendo el conocimiento de lo que se tiene por mejor *hic et nunc*, eso supone que la posibilidad de no querer hacerlo ya fue superada previamente.<sup>43</sup> Nadie puede no querer hacer lo que sabe

<sup>42</sup> Vigo (1999, p. 96).

<sup>43</sup> Recordemos el ejemplo de *EN* 1147a25 y ss. (citado *supra*) en el que en un mismo agente conviven conocimientos universales contrapuestos: hay que probar lo dulce, no hay que probar lo dulce. Una vez que se lo está evitando, significa que se ha actualizado la premisa que afirma que hay que evitarlo. Tomada la decisión, ya no hay conflicto.

(o cree) que quiere hacer y que está haciendo, desde el momento en que lo está haciendo.<sup>44</sup> Por el contrario, quien conoce en el sentido que he denominado “derivado” sí puede obrar de manera incontinente, pues posee el conocimiento, pero puede no utilizarlo cuando llega el momento de actuar y, así, hacer algo que sabe (o cree) que no quiere hacer. Es fundamental resaltar que *solo* quien conoce en sentido derivado puede hallarse en esta situación, pues al momento de actuar no dispone de ni utiliza el conocimiento relevante para el caso particular que enfrenta, sino que, aun poseyéndolo, no lo actualiza en ese momento.

La pregunta evidente es: ¿cuál de estos sentidos aristotélicos de “conocer” se le podría atribuir a Sócrates? A primera vista parece difícil sostener que el Sócrates del *Protágoras* esté pensando en un conocimiento de tipo “derivado” al momento de discutir la incontinencia. A esta clase de agentes que poseen el conocimiento pero no lo ejercen Sócrates los considera, más bien, ignorantes. Y esto ocurre porque, sobre la base de una psicología monolíticamente cerrada sobre la racionalidad, la posición socrática no admite, en lo que a la esfera práctica respecta, grados intermedios entre el saber y la ignorancia: hay quienes saben o creen que hacer *x* es lo mejor para ellos, y hay quienes lo ignoran (es decir, quienes creen que *y* es lo mejor, cuando en realidad no lo es). Y lo que es fundamental: *tertium non datur*.<sup>45</sup> El conocedor aristotélico en

<sup>44</sup> Con la obvia excepción de la compulsión (me obligan a hacer mal a un tercero bajo amenaza de dañar a mis seres queridos) o la ignorancia respecto de lo que se está haciendo realmente (Edipo quiere matar al hombre que le impide el paso, pero no quiere matar a su padre).

<sup>45</sup> Me distancio, en este punto, de Rorty (1980, pp. 269-270), quien equipara el par aristotélico “conocimiento potencial / conocimiento actual” con la posición socrático-platónica conforme la cual el ser humano nace con el conocimiento de las Ideas latente que, mediante la reminiscencia, se actualiza. La analogía no funciona porque el conocimiento innato de la Idea no llega a asimilarse conceptualmente con el poseer-sin-utilizar aristotélico lo suficiente como para que Sócrates considere que tal hombre ‘conoce’, pues, en ese caso, quien obra de manera diferente estaría actuando de manera acrática, cosa que Sócrates niega. Asimismo, en el caso de Sócrates-Platón estamos ante un conocimiento innato, mientras que el innatismo aristotélico es el de la potencia primera, es decir: quien no sabe nada.

sentido propio (κυρίως) se asimilaría a aquel que “ni mientras sabe ni mientras está creyendo que existen otras cosas mejores que las que hace —y <que son> posibles de hacer—, hace estas cosas si es posible hacer las mejores” (*Prot.* 358b7-c1). En consecuencia, Sócrates consideraría ignorantes a los conocedores en sentido derivado, porque, si bien poseen el conocimiento, el hecho de que no actúen conforme él da la pauta de que están actuando conforme una opinión que orienta su decisión, aun cuando también posean el conocimiento contrario. Y el hecho de creer que lo que se hace es lo mejor cuando en realidad no lo es es lo que Sócrates denomina “ignorancia”: “tener una opinión falsa y engañarse-con-mentiras acerca de asuntos muy valiosos” (*Prot.* 358c).

Llamativamente (¿o no?), asimilar a quienes conocen en sentido derivado con la ignorancia es algo que el propio Aristóteles ha hecho:

El que está aprendiendo es conocedor en potencia (δυνάμει), de un modo diferente <al que> ya tiene <el conocimiento> y no lo actualiza/ejercita [...]. Aquello que aprende gracias a su capacidad llega a ser algo distinto a lo que era <antes de aprender, pero también> en potencia (pues el que tiene conocimiento pero no lo ejerce es, de algún modo, conocedor en potencia, pero no del modo en que lo era antes de aprender). Cuando se está en ese estado, si acaso nada lo impide, se actualiza y se ejerce <el conocimiento>; si no, se estará en lo contrario, es decir: en la ignorancia (ὅταν δ' οὕτως ἔχη, εἴαν τι μὴ κωλύῃ, ἐνεργεῖ καὶ θεωρεῖ, ἢ ἔσται ἐν τῇ ἀντιφάσει καὶ ἐν ἀγνοίᾳ). (*Fis.* 255a33-b5)<sup>46</sup>

El sentido derivado de quien posee un conocimiento que no ejerce lleva a Aristóteles a considerarlo un ignorante, como el propio Sócrates seguramente habría hecho. La mera potencia

<sup>46</sup> En palabras de Gauthier-Jolif (1970): “si hay una idea que Aristóteles, a continuación de Platón, ha iluminado es que la contemplación no es ni la adquisición ni la posesión de la ciencia, sino su uso actual: contemplar se define por oposición a aprender y saber; se trata de considerar (*regarder*) actualmente una verdad que ya aprendimos y sabemos” (p. 855; traducción mía ).



epistémica de quien no ejerce sus opiniones porta un lastre de no-ser que lo ubica en un ineluctable segundo lugar respecto de quien está teorizando *hic et nunc*.<sup>47</sup>

Se ve, en definitiva, que, en terreno práctico, el conocimiento por el conocimiento mismo no es una meta que Aristóteles persiga,<sup>48</sup> dado que, si dicho conocimiento no es además ejercido, ese hombre merecerá el título de “conocedor”, pero en sentido derivado, como mera formalidad o, mejor dicho, como mera posibilidad: es *capaz* de ser un conocedor, pero no es un conocedor en sentido propio (κυρίως), pues también es capaz de no ser un conocedor. El conocimiento es condición necesaria pero no suficiente para su ejercicio; a la inversa, el ejercicio del conocimiento supone su posesión.<sup>49</sup>

## CONCLUSIÓN

A lo largo de este trabajo he insistido en que tanto Sócrates como Aristóteles consideran que sería “extraño” (δαινόν) obrar en contra de un conocimiento que, además de poseído, se está ejerciendo al momento de actuar: “Parece que ocurre lo que investigaba Sócrates, porque tal afección <sc. la incontinencia> no se da mientras lo que se considera conocimiento en sentido propio está

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<sup>47</sup> Recuérdese, en este punto, la “señal” que sirve para distinguir a quien aprendió de quien no aprendió en *Met.* IX, 8, 1050a17-21 (citado *supra*). Caso distinto es el de la acción de inteligir (νοεῖν) que, por no necesitar de objeto ninguno para realizarse —a diferencia de la percepción sensible y, como vimos, del teorizar—, se puede ejercitar a voluntad: “de ahí que <se pueda> inteligir (νοῆσαι) en sí mismo toda vez que se quiera, pero percibir sensiblemente no es posible en sí mismo <cuando se quiera>, pues es necesario que se dé el objeto sensible” (*DA* 417b23-25).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. *EN* 1095a5-6.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. *Met.* 1050a10-14: “los animales, en efecto, no ven para tener vista, sino que tienen vista para ver. Del mismo modo, también <se tiene> el arte de construir para construir y la teoría para teorizar. Sin embargo, no se teoriza para tener la teoría, a no ser quienes están estudiando; pero estos no teorizan a no ser que lo hagan de ese modo <sc. en la medida en que estudiar es una especie de forma de teorizar>”.

presente, ni tal <conocimiento> es arrastrado por la afección” (EN 1147b14-17).<sup>50</sup>

La nueva referencia a un conocimiento que no puede ser “arrastrado” (περιέλκω) indica que Aristóteles sigue pensando en el Sócrates del *Protágoras*. En esta oportunidad, concluyendo su análisis de la posición socrática, Aristóteles confirma lo que sugerí más arriba: lo que, según Sócrates, el agente considera conocimiento (δοκούσης ἐπιστήμης) es lo que el estagirita considera ἐπιστήμη “en sentido propio” (κυρίως), a saber: el conocimiento que se está teorizando *hic et nunc*. Cuando esta clase de conocimiento está presente, la incontinencia es imposible. Y en esto Sócrates y Aristóteles opinan de igual modo. El error de Sócrates no fue, por lo tanto, haber negado la posibilidad de la acción incontinente tal como la concibe, sino el hecho de no haber discriminado entre distintos modos de conocimiento/ignorancia, sobre cuya base otra clase de ἀκρασία sí es posible. Aristóteles continúa, así, la senda socrática señalando que el análisis de la incontinencia no debe atender tan solo el examen del vínculo entre placeres y conocimiento, sino también diversos modos de conocer que están en juego cuando el placer nos derrota: “lo que Aristóteles no acepta es la opinión de que la tesis socrática es inconsistente con la opinión ordinaria según la cual la incontinencia ocurre cada tanto. Se limita a mostrar que las dos posiciones <sc. la propia y la socrática> son consistentes, por lo que no estamos obligados a rechazar ninguna de ellas. Elimina la dificultad y deja las opiniones recibidas en pie”.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Algo similar se había dicho en 1146a4-7: “¿es entonces la prudencia la que resiste <la incontinencia>? Ella, en efecto, es lo más fuerte. Pero esto sería ridículo, porque el mismo hombre será prudente e incontinente al mismo tiempo, y nadie diría que es propio del prudente hacer voluntariamente lo peor”.

<sup>51</sup> Robinson (1977, p. 84; traducción mía). Como se ve, Robinson también considera que la única crítica de Aristóteles a Sócrates es que su propuesta descuida los hechos manifiestos (φαινόμενα). En una línea similar, cf. Gosling (1990, p. 38). Por el contrario, Hardie (1968) rechaza que Aristóteles esté dando la razón a Sócrates tomando como base un clásico texto de Cook Wilson de 1879 (*Prolegomena to Ethics*),

En conclusión, la usualmente denominada “crítica” aristotélica a la posición socrática no es absoluta, sino, en todo caso, parcial, pues se trata, más bien, de una reformulación y enriquecimiento del modo en que el hijo de la partera analizó y concibió la incontinencia. Sócrates tuvo razón en lo que dijo, pero no dijo todo lo que había para decir al respecto, pues descuidó ciertos aspectos de los hechos y opiniones manifiestos vinculados con el fenómeno. Su planteo no fue equivocado, sino incompleto.<sup>52</sup>

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en el cual se afirma que Aristóteles no puede haber sido el autor de *EN VII*, 3, precisamente porque “mientras que Aristóteles creía que los hombres actúan de modos que saben que son malos mientras actúan, la solución a la que se arriba en *VII*, 3 afirma que Sócrates tenía razón cuando dijo que eso no podía pasar” (p. 262; traducción mía). En este trabajo he querido mostrar que tanto la posición de Aristóteles como la de Sócrates son consistentes entre sí, por lo que concluir que *EN VII*, 3 no puede haber sido escrito por Aristóteles quizás sea un tanto exagerado.

<sup>52</sup> A criterio de Aristóteles, el planteo socrático fue incompleto no solo en relación con la existencia de más de un modo de conocer/ignorar —tema que he analizado aquí—, sino también con el hecho de que son factores irracionales los que interfieren con la actualización del conocimiento potencial al momento de actuar (cf. Vigo, 1999, p. 74). Otra falencia del planteo socrático podría ser, asimismo, el hecho de que el alma tiene distintas ‘partes’ o ‘aspectos’, de modo que la diferencia entre el continente y el incontinente estaría dada por los modos en que sus respectivas economías internas se organizan: cf. *EN* 1102b13-19. Es por todo esto que Hardie habla de “*Socrates’ unqualified denial of akrasia*” (1968, p. 272; cf. Broadie, 1991, p. 283), fenómeno que Aristóteles vendría, precisamente, a cualificar en elementos más específicos.

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# Aristotle

## Mentor for the Soul

Julia Penn Shaw, EdD<sup>1</sup> 

**Abstract:** Aristotle serves as a valuable, and practical, model for mentors of adult learners. His writings give insight into mentoring even as we practice it today. Although he lived in ancient Greece (c. 384 BCE to 322 BCE) and his audience was aristocratic males, the tenets of his philosophy for adult learning hold true in the present age for learners of any race, class, or gender because they are built on human attributes common to us all. Written from the author's perspective of more than 15 years of mentoring diverse adult learners, this article distills some principles for mentoring from Aristotle's work that resonate with current practice: (a) mentor the soul, (b) understand the student's "puzzle," (c) trust our senses, and (d) develop excellence. Aristotle ideas give "form" to the task of mentoring, honoring excellence as a virtue to be sought—and achieved—in everyday actions. It is heartening to view the mentoring that we do today as part of a very long and very rich tradition, foundational to Western Civilization.

**Keywords:** Aristotle, mentoring adult learners, Lyceum, history of mentoring, soul

Mentoring adults in educational settings in these times of change has never been more critical. The challenges of adult students have intensified, requiring them to seek new directions in their lives: In addition, communities have even greater need for effective civic contributions. To meet these challenges, mentors of adult learners benefit from fresh sources for guidance. This is certainly true for

academics such as myself for whom mentoring of adult learners has been a critical faculty role for more than 15 years.

In adult education, mentoring evokes many associations. Merriam and colleagues (2007) state that a "teacher/mentor challenges students to examine their conceptions of self and the world and to formulate new, more developed perspectives" (p. 138), then more strongly that mentors are "life guides" (p. 169), and stronger still that mentoring "is about relationship, support, and increasing the human spirit" (p. 205, quoting English et al., 2003).

The term *mentor* itself, derived from the ancient Greek, refers to an advisor or guide with rich experience in his or her field of expertise

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WORLD.”

(Levy-Feldman, 2018), so I should not have been surprised at new personal insights on adult mentoring that I discovered while recently reading Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. Although Aristotle lived more than 2,000 years ago (c. 384–322 BCE) and mentored only privileged members of society (elite males), his teachings, when applied to us all, are still profoundly relevant.

For example, I recognize resonance between Mezirow's "disorienting dilemma" and Aristotle's "personal puzzle." Like Aristotle, Mezirow (2000) and Brookfield (2005) found that self-directed adult learners seek *endoxa* (wise council) to address compelling personal questions. For Aristotle, learning is holistic, as one seeks to transform one's "soul" (Taylor, 2001). Learning is "situated" to an individual's unique time, place, and circumstance (Fenwick, 2003; Hansman, 2001). Because personal excellence scaffolds good citizenship, personal virtue is practiced within a "community of practice" (Boud & Walker, 1991; Dirkx, 1998; Jarvis, 2004; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1999). That individual excellence is integral to social justice is foundational to social reformers such as Dewey (1938/1997) and Freire (1998). The maturation of perspective-taking through life experience invokes Erikson's (1980) psychosocial development of wisdom, Basseches's (1984) integration of thesis and antithesis toward synthesis, and Kegan's (1982) evolved perspective-taking. Aristotle's teachings connect soul to heart, a compelling perspective for adult learners today.

Aristotle's life work was to mentor. After studying in Plato's Academy, Aristotle created the Lyceum, a school for "adult learners." Aristotle's pupils studied the sciences, the arts, mathematics, logic, philosophy, psychology, politics, and theology. His known works were divided into the *Organon* (discussions about argumentation created by scholars in the Middle Ages), the theoretical sciences, practical sciences, and productive sciences (Zalta, 2016). Centuries later, Byzantine scholars revered Aristotle as the "First Teacher."

My interest in Aristotle is as a mentor of adult learners, not as a philosopher. His ideas illuminate foundations and methods of mentoring, resonating with my mentoring and teaching experiences, and of adult learning experts such as those mentioned. No one

perspective guides mentoring, but Aristotle's teachings augment other sources. Given the depth and sensibility of his ideas, and the clarity and relevance of his contributions to education, Aristotle could be a reference in every text on adult learning.

In my reading of Aristotle, I extracted four principles for practice: (a) mentor the soul, (b) understand the student's "puzzle," (c) trust our senses, and (d) develop excellence. Each principle arose from my extended mentoring experience reflected through Aristotle's writings. Examples from practice are presented with each principle, providing suggestive directions for thought. Readers are invited to reflect on these principles in ways that benefit their practice in both formal roles in adult education and opportunities that arise in informal settings.

## **Mentoring That Matters: Principles for Practice**

### **Mentor the Soul**

The soul is at the heart of Aristotle's philosophy. But what is the soul? "We must no more ask whether the soul and body are one than ask whether the wax and the figure on it are one" (Aristotle, *De Anima*). Humans seek happiness by creating the best "form" of ourselves.

Why do we, and our students, seek to change the form of our souls? Because, according to Aristotle, we seek happiness, and "happiness is a virtuous activity of the soul" (Aristotle, 340 BC/2004, 1097b). The modern concept of "transformation" of a student's life through education (Brookfield, 2005; Mezirow, 2000) has ancient roots.

We sense "soul" when students share their life goals, exhilarations, and frustrations. Yes, we talk about class schedules, but behind those discussions lies exploration of the singular human life whose path we influence. Central to mentoring is that students experience the best form of themselves within the learning environments we provide. Learning is a desire, impelled by soul within the body. For Aristotle, the soul is the center of excellence developed through the moral and intellectual virtues. The moral virtues rely on the intellect to guide behavior when the body is challenged.

For Aristotle, a virtue is a character trait that helps us achieve a good life. A good life is happy because it is in accordance with reason. Reason separates humans from beasts:



Now the soul of man is divided into two parts, one of which has a rational principle in itself, and the other, not having a rational principle in itself, is able to obey such a principle. And we call a man in any way good because he has the virtues of these two parts. (*Politics*, VII, 1333a16–19, in Aristotle, 1941).

Reason directs our behavior toward “the Doctrine of the Mean.” The mean is a level of emotion befitting the situation—either strong or mild. Excellent behavior (a virtue) is the right balance between too much (vice of excess) and too little (vice of deficiency) at a particular time and place. As Aristotle writes,

Anybody can become angry—that is easy, but to be angry with the right person and to the right degree and at the right time and for the right purpose, and in the right way—that is not within everybody’s power and is not easy. (Aristotle, 340 BC/2004, 1097b)

Using the doctrine of the mean, passions of pleasure/pain balance with temperance, fear with courage, and shame with modesty. When we assist a student, we hope to exhibit the virtue of wisdom—neither short-sighted nor overly expansive. Ideally, we provide the right amount of guidance to the right student at the right time for the right reasons.

#### *Aristotle in practice: Mentor the soul*

Christie, from an elite, White, Protestant family, fortified her position as a world citizen through deep study of human ecology. As her underlying intent for the studies became clearer over time, she articulated her desire, both to herself and to me, that her education was helping her balance fear of making a rash decision with fear of avoiding a desired life choice: adopting a mixed-race child. Her education helped her achieve this balance, and at graduation, Christie delightedly shared news that she and her husband had adopted an African baby.

#### ***Understand the Student’s “Puzzle”***

Students come to us with a particular life “puzzle”—Aristotle’s word for a personal question so penetrating that we are compelled to move, test, challenge, reflect,

discuss, and act in ways that transform the soul. Aristotle uses “actuality” in his definition of *soul*, affirming that the soul manifests itself in action. Hope becomes a waking dream when it is investigated, tried, tested, and found to fit. Soul is embodied. More recently, Dewey (1938/1997) recognizes this reality in presenting experiential learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 7). Do Dewey’s teachings not resonate well with Aristotle’s?

As mentors, we help our students achieve their goals because “happiness is the settling of the soul into its most appropriate spot” (Aristotle, n.d.-a). “Where your talents and the needs of the world cross, therein lies your vocation” (Aristotle, n.d.-b). Recently, theologian Frederick Buechner (1992) said, “Vocation is the place where our deep gladness meets the world’s deep need” (p. 189). Does this not sound Aristotelian?

#### *Aristotle in practice: Understand the student’s “puzzle.”*

Jackie, activities director at a nursing home, was puzzled as to why her StoryTime program was so successful with residents. In telling their life stories, elders transformed them from sad to satisfying. In our study, I asked her if her passion for this project addressed a personal puzzle. Jackie experienced an “aha” moment when she discovered that her story work with seniors did address a personal need—her sadness that her mother, hiding untold stories, had died with remorse. As Jackie’s seniors “grasped and transformed” knowledge of their own lives from regret into acceptance, she transformed her mother’s story from regret into acceptance as well.

#### ***Trust Our Senses***

In contrast to the skepticism of Descartes (1980),

Aristotle begins with the conviction that our perceptual and cognitive faculties are basically dependable, that they for the most part put us into direct contact with the features and divisions of our world, and that we need not dally with skeptical postures before engaging in substantive philosophy. (Zalta, 2016)



This grounding enables us to trust ourselves as mentors, trust our diverse students, and trust that our student-mentor relationship has a substantive experiential foundation.

Self-knowledge is a holistic endeavor. As mentors, we are privileged to engage learners as whole persons who seek to flourish as individuals within communities. Students bring their life experiences to our discussions, as well as current questions, abilities, habits, and motivation. In so doing, they may build trusting relationships with students of other cultures as well as with their mentors. Trust is soul work. We frequently learn where students work, names of their children, challenges of health issues, or deaths of loved ones—and receive photos of marriages, births, and even favorite pets. Significant life changes impact learning to enrich it, delay it, or redirect it.

Plutarch (1992) states, “The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting.” What fuels a particular learner at a particular time? Some adult learners seek credentials for a promotion and others to set an example for their children. As they prioritize schooling into their busy lives, they demonstrate qualities that lead to successful lifelong learning, better personal and familial situations, and improved current circumstances. These goals are the right focus at this right time. We understand with Aristotle that our students need a stable launching point. Returning to school productively engages their critical thinking skills in application to critical aspects of their lives. Students learn “practical wisdom”—available only through life experience—which, for Aristotle, distinguishes the seasoned adult from even the brightest youth. Achievement of present educational goals may lead to an equilibrium that is foundational for future growth (Piaget, 1970).

Other students come to adult education to stabilize an unfocused identity (understanding themselves) or to find fixed external points of reference (understanding how they fit in). Schooling provides a moratorium for sustenance, new outlooks, and possibly reorganizing one’s gifts for a better purpose (Marcia, 1987). Learning leads students to ponder new puzzles, but the puzzle most motivating is the puzzle of the self.

#### *Aristotle in practice: Trust our senses*

Susan’s fundamentalist Christian background both nurtured and challenged her. Strong bonding among the women and focus on family life had blessed her to

believe in herself. The patriarchal structure of her community, however, held many women back. She resolved her puzzle by working within her community to strengthen choices for its women. Trusting herself, she undergirded her pursuit of a PhD with her nurturing skills and compassion, advocating for religious studies to be included in psychotherapeutic training. She elicited her holistic personal experience to enact culture change in professional education for therapists.

### ***Develop Excellence***

Central to Aristotle’s work is the pursuit of excellence (virtue). Moral virtues require the right action at the right time with the right person to the right degree. Sometimes the educated mind must accept an idea that is initially repugnant but has truth in it. Erikson (1980) notes the counterpoint to wisdom is dismissal and denial. Will a decision at a particular time have the right balance of accepting and rejecting? Many students, while they “transform” through education, must confront what to keep and what to let go of from their past (Mezirow, 1991, 2000). Balance toward personal excellence requires these challenging decisions.

Excellence is actuality in a given interaction at a given time. Part of excellence is in accepting, and part is in rejecting ideas and actions:

It is the mark of an educated mind to look for precision in each class of things just as far as the nature of the subject admits; it is . . . foolish to accept probable reasoning from a mathematician. (Aristotle, 340 BC/2004, 1109a).

#### *Aristotle in practice: Develop excellence*

David’s initial goal was to become a licensed clinical psychologist. As a 52 year old Black male with a high school education, this was a challenging goal—exacerbated by inconsistent academic skills and inadequate social preparation. As David achieved his associate’s degree, he adjusted his professional goal from a PhD in psychology to certification as a life coach. In this, David was developing excellence. By releasing his initial academic goal while still focusing on helping people, he balanced his priorities and

moved from being anxious and focused on the opinion of others toward being calm and self-directed.

## The Mentoring of the Mentor

Reading Aristotle yielded precious nuggets of thought—phrases that are succinct, perceptive, and immediately useful. Like catchy tunes, they are impactful and correct in their assessment of human nature. Aristotle described what I intuitively recognize as “best practices” that resonate with my personal experience and ground research in adult learning. Indeed, when inculcating new skills one may follow an Aristotelian path: Practice until habit develops, perhaps one principle at a time until it feels comfortable and familiar. There is a reason, after all, for calling excellent skills “best practices.”

I find my exposure to Aristotle to be

- Comforting—through my increased knowledge of Aristotle, I have a stronger appreciation for the deep roots of the mentoring tradition;
- Invigorating—Aristotle offers me a “form” to my work as a mentor and connects the visceral with the sublime in a way that makes the actions of the body more understandable and the actions of the mind more meaningful;
- Challenging—Aristotle reaffirms that excellence is an attribute of action, not of intention or abstraction. The role of mentoring adult learners tests our excellence within real-world settings where the lives of others are influenced by our successes in mastering ourselves;
- Community-affirming—after reading about the moral virtues in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (most discussed here), one can read *Politics*, where the intellectual virtues are presented as virtues of personal excellence applied to the community through active citizenship. Aristotle affirms the importance of education as the basis for both personal and communal excellence.

## The Value of Mentoring

Aristotle resonated with my own perspective that civilization relies on citizens of a society to (a) learn sound ways of thinking (b) about substantive topics of knowledge (b) and to apply that learning to personal and societal advancement. Aristotle contributes to these

critical areas of civilized discourse. My reading of Aristotle uncovered four principles for best practices in mentoring: (a) mentor the soul, (b) seek to understand the student’s “puzzle,” (c) trust our senses, and (d) develop excellence. Some of these start from the student (mentor the soul), and some start from our practice (develop excellence), but all apply to each interaction between student and mentor. Ideally, these principles become so much a part of us that we automatically apply them in our mentoring practice. As a mentor of adult learners, I believe excellence in education is foundational to a healthy society, and excellence in mentoring contributes to that end. Through Aristotle, the master mentor, I better understand why my role as a mentor to adult learners is so challenging and also so rewarding.

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## **What Does Paul the Apostle have to do with Aristotle, Cicero and Quintilian? About the encouragement of the Thessalonians**

**Ezra JaeKyung Cho, *The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians: In Light of Ancient Funeral Oration* (Pickwick Publications, Eugene, OR, 2020)**

Tudorel-Constantin RUSU

Can we take into consideration new approaches in the field of biblical interpretation, nowadays? Ezra JaeKyung Cho, member of the teaching staff at Washington University of Virginia and the first Korean student with a Doctorate of Philosophy in Biblical Studies at The Faculty of Asbury Theological Seminary Wilmore - Kentucky, proves, in his first published book - *The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians: In Light of Ancient Funeral Oration* - that the answer to our question is an affirmative one.

The book, which is, in fact, the Ph.D. thesis of Dr. Cho, was published in October 2020 in Eugene - Oregon, by Pickwick Publications. Initially, as the author acknowledges in the preface of the book, he tried to interpret 1 Thessalonians - a Pauline letter - by an epistolary approach. Unsatisfied with this convenient methodology and influenced by that of Dr. Witherington's, he finished his work approaching the text from a rhetorical perspective, which is, in his opinion, more accurate than other methodologies and the best solution for a clear interpretation of 1 Thessalonians. Anyway, the novelty of this book is, more than a different approach to 1 Thessalonians, but the fact that it shows, in a highly detailed manner, how Paul the Apostle used rhetorical strategies and skills in this specific letter.

*The Rhetorical Approach to 1 Thessalonians: In Light of Ancient Funeral Oration* has 302 pages and is divided into eight chapters, preceded by *Tables*, *Preface* and *Introduction* and succeeded by *Bibliography*. Each chapter contains at the end the corresponding footnotes. Both in the preface and introduction, but also throughout the book, the author presents his main contention, that Paul the Apostle "employs elements of epideictic funerary oratory to persuade his audience in writing 1 Thessalonians - although the letter itself is not a funeral oration - and thus an examination of elements of epideictic funerary oratory illuminate the language and arguments of Paul in this letter".

The first two chapters present *The History of Interpretation and Methodology* and *The Philosophy and Theology of Death and Dying in Funeral Orations and 1 Thessalonians*. There are two broad approaches on the structure

and theme of the letter of 1 Thessalonians, says the author at the beginning of the first chapter: one consists in various analyses of the logical or thematic development, while the other includes analyses of the epistolary pattern. Cho reviews the theories of more than 50 scholars about 1 Thessalonians and, by examining key advocates of each approach, he shows that each has serious explanatory limits in what regards the Pauline text. Trying to explain how the language of 1 Thessalonians has been understood by researchers, he stops at the usual and overworked approach - the epistolary approach - to which he dedicates a broad analysis.

Even though Cho admits that there are overlapping elements between the epistolary approach and the rhetorical approach, he brings several arguments to support the methodological use of understanding the Pauline letter in rhetorical terms. One is that in the ancient world, the formal oral proclamation was the main way of dissemination, as only 5 percent or more of the total adult population (including women and slaves) was literate. That is why Paul's explicit request is made in 1 Thessalonians 5:27: "I solemnly command you by the Lord that this letter be read to all of them". Another piece of evidence for the rhetorical nature of Paul's letters is the letter's length. If the average length of a letter of Cicero is 295 words, and of Seneca 955, for the Apostle Paul the average length of a letter is 2.500 words. Apart from this, Cho explains that being born in Tarsus (the birthplace of Hermogenes, the greatest rhetorician of the second century A.D.) Paul was familiar with Greco-Roman rhetoric, given its age and influence, and therefore epistolary conventions may not provide the most adequate hermeneutical key for this text.

In the subchapter entitled *The Methodology of Rhetorical Criticism*, the author presents rhetorical criticism as being based on the works of classical rhetoricians of Antiquity, such as Aristotle's *Art of Rhetoric*, Cicero's *De Inventione* and the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, and Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*. He is also referring to the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, the sole surviving rhetorical treaty before Aristotle.

The second chapter surveys the Epicurean and Stoic theology and philosophy of death, the philosopher's consolatory letters and funeral orations (the author noticed that the representative authors of consolatory letters, most of them influenced by stoicism, are Cicero, Seneca, Pliny the Younger, and Plutarch), the tombstone epitaphs in Greek and Latin and the philosophy and theology of death in 1 Thessalonians.

What is the main difference between the Stoic philosophy of death and the theology of death in 1 Thessalonians? Paul calls the pagan people as "others...who have no hope" (1 Thessalonians 4:13b), continuing the ideas of ancient philosophy as Theocritus, who said that "hopes are for the living, but the ones who die are without hope" or of Julian's, who explains in *Epistle to Himerius* 69 that Himerius wife was prematurely "snatched away like a torch". Paul creates a powerful contrast between the pagan thought-world and Christian beliefs about death, the last ones being based on the Resurrection, the hope of

reunion of the living with the dead and the new creation within Christ's triumphant *parousia*.

In the next three chapters - *Funeral Oratory in Speeches*, *The Roman Oratory and the Jewish Oratory* and *Funeral Orations in Rhetorical Handbooks* - the author identifies many elements to categorize the rhetorical genre of 1 Thessalonians into epideictic rhetoric. Concrete examples of this can be amplification and embellishment with hypobole (1 Thessalonians 1:8; 5:16-22), the ongoing stress on anamnesis, an epideictic contrast between praiseworthy and blameworthy behaviour, prayer (1 Thessalonians 3:11-13), and the consolation and exhortation at the end of the epistle.

The aim of epideictic rhetoric is shown by concrete examples from the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintilian. Regarding the types of pure epideictic speech, the author brings them together with their specifics and so results: funeral oration, festal gathering/ party orations, paradoxical encomium, and encomium of person. Special attention is given to similarities, but also to small differences between contents of Greek funeral speech (5th - 4th B.C.), Roman funeral speech (2nd B.C. - 4th A.D.) and Jewish funeral orations (*4 Maccabees*). The Athenian funeral speech, dedicated initially to those citizens who had fallen in battle for their country, had the primary purposes of showing the continuity between the living Athenian community and the dead, to unify the Athenian community and to exhort the young to imitate the dead heroes, on the one side, and console the adults, on the other side. Cho notices that one of the main purposes of Athenian's funeral orations - to console and exhort the living - is presented and reflected in 1 Thessalonians 4:13: "But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope". Furthermore, the Athenian funeral orations end with wishful prayers. 1 Thessalonians follows the same structure: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen". (1 Thessalonians 5:28).

The original and important parts of the present research are chapters 6 and 7 - *Comparing 1 Thessalonians 1-3 and Funeral Oratory* and *Comparing between 1 Thessalonians 4-5 and Funeral Oratory*. After exploring, in previous chapters, ancient funeral orations and rhetorical handbooks, and discovering the structure, function, and purpose, and rhetorical *topoi* or commonplaces, the author applies the pattern of epideictic consolation speeches to the text of 1 Thessalonians. Step by step, almost every phrase and paragraph from the five chapters of 1 Thessalonians is analyzed, described, categorized from the perspective of ancient rhetoric, more specifically funeral oratory. In these chapters, the reader discovers that Paul's letter is modelled on ancient funeral speeches, that the text can be seen as a written discourse and that Paul the Apostle uses effective and rhetorical methods to encourage the Thessalonians, who were facing growing persecution, suffering, and even martyrdom of their members.

The scientific novelty is also given by the categorizing made by the author of the whole 1 Thessalonians into the typical ancient funeral orations divisions: the

exordium (1:2-3), the narration or encomium (1:4-3:10), the consolation and exhortation (4:1-5:15), and peroratio (5:16-22) with prayer (5:22-28).

To show how the author analyzes the text of the epistle and how he discovers Paul's rhetorical skills and arguments, I will make some references to what Cho called „the third exhortation/consolation” - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. I chose this passage because it is being used as a liturgical text in the Christian Orthodox funeral service. In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul uses a distinctive emphatic formula by saying, “But we do not want you to be uninformed...about those who have died”, that indicates his intention to show and teach a new topic, which is not yet known by his audience - „the brothers”. Using expression like “as others do who have no hope” (4:13), or “the Gentiles who do not know God,” (4:5b) “outsiders (4:12a)”, Paul differentiates „the brothers” from pagans and unifies the Thessalonians believers into the newly chosen Christian community, with a new collective identity. This technique, as we have seen before, is the same as a funeral oration in purpose and function. We need to say that Paul's main topic in 1 Thessalonians is the theme of hope of Jesus' *parousia* and he suggests that at every partial conclusion such as 1:3,10; 2:12, 19; 3:13; 4:13-5:11; 5:23. Paul describes “Jesus' *parousia*” (second coming) as a processional *parousia*, like an image of conquering general entering the city or the image of triumphal procession “with a cry of command, with the archangel's call and with the sound of God's trumpet” (4:16). Paul was probably familiar with the triumphal processions in his period and their cultural implications (like triumphal processions in Rome by Germanicus Caesar in A.D. 17, Caligula in A.D. 40, and Claudius in A.D. 43) and used some imperial funerary motifs in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 to describe Christ's second coming. To strengthen them by showing that they are not alone and that they have by their side the Emperor of all - Jesus Christ, Paul uses the power of images to do that. Just as the Roman imperial funeral procession interweaves the imperial processional parade with the triumphal image and the apotheosis of the emperor, Paul also employs the triumphal image of Jesus' *parousia* with a discussion regarding the death of the Thessalonian believers who had become martyrs. Also regarding the image of Christ's processional *parousia*, Cho noticed that Paul reverses the direction and order of the ancient funeral procession in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18. If the funeral procession starts from inside the city and progresses to the cemetery outside the city, which shows the segregation of life and the end of life, Jesus' triumphal procession began outside the city and went into the city, which indicates a new era of Jesus' eternal reign with life for both the dead and the living and an eternal feast with the triumphal Lord. It is also noteworthy that Jesus will descend from heaven (4:16a), which is outside the city. In the cemetery outside the city, the dead in Christ will rise first (4:16b) with Jesus' triumphal *parousia* through the herald of archangel's trumpets. Then, says Paul, “we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together to meet (εἰς ἀπάντησιν) the Lord in the air” (4:17a). The term ἀπάντησιν evokes the image of a Greco-Roman formal reception as it is a technical term referring to the civic custom of



a Hellenistic formal reception. This word refers to the custom of sending a delegation of leading officials outside the city to welcome the royal personality or dignitary into the city or community for his official visit with great tribute and honour. Through these analogies, in association with the term as *παρουσία* (the coming of the Lord) and *ἀπάντησιν*, Paul pictures the Lord Jesus as the king escorted on the remainder of his journey to earth by his royal chosen people, that is, both those newly raised from the dead and those who have remained alive. Through this process, both the dead and the living together, who are prepared for the *parousia*, will meet Jesus and escort him into the city, “and so we will be with the Lord forever” (4: 17b).

In 4:16, Paul described Jesus’ triumphal *parousia* by three prepositional phrases: “For the Lord himself, with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call and with the sound of God’s trumpet, will descend from heaven”. In Cho’s comment, Christ’s cry of command is directed to the dead, whom he calls to the resurrection through the voice of the archangel and the trumpet of God. These three prepositional phrases are all signals for the resurrection and an accompanying mark and intimation of the end. In any case, the third event to mark Jesus’ *parousia* as a triumphal processional *parousia* - “the sound of God’s trumpet” - must be interpreted in the meaning of the antiquity, not as a musical instrument, but to give signals and strengthen the war-cry of the soldiers. The trumpet has in 1 Thessalonians the double image: a mournful funeral procession and God’s triumphal *parousia* for his people’s resurrection. The author says that with the trumpet image, Paul employs the funeral motif of the trumpet from Greco-Roman culture, but simultaneously reverses it with Jesus’ triumphal processional *parousia*, particularly the triumphal entrance of the warrior king. This is consistent with the fact that Paul implants Jesus’ triumphal *parousia* for the dead into the hearts of the living with the overlapping image of the trumpet - the mournful funeral and the triumphal procession of Christ’s *parousia*. Quoting Mary Beard who claims that in the Roman imperial funeral procession, “some elements of triumphal practice have been found in funeral processions”, Cho says that Paul interweaves the triumphal image of Christ’s *parousia* into the funeral ritual and the death of his people.

As I already mentioned on a previous page in my review, the author mentions that ancient Julian describes the Himerius prematurely wife death by saying that she was “snatched away (*αναρπασθηναι*) like a torch”. Cho observes that Paul uses this symbolic funerary language (it was very common in ancient funeral orations) and the verb *ἀρπαζω* - *to snatch away* in 1 Thessalonians - “will be snatched in the clouds - *ἀρπαγησόμεθα ἐν νεφέλαις*” (4:17) - but not to express the death and the power of death in the ancient/pagan context of funeral rituals. Paul uses the verb *ἀρπαζω* with some twist in meaning and perspective. He inverts this symbolic word of death into the triumphal and hopeful word of resurrection through the Lord’s *parousia*. If the word *ἀρπαζω* usually indicates death and separation from the living, Paul conversely uses it to denote association with the Lord and the living; he contrasts the snatching of the dead



under the earth with the releasing to the air. More than that, Cho show that the ancient expression of *ἀρπαζω* is mainly used in the past tense, which indicates the doomed destiny and despair concerning death. Paul, however, uses the expression of “will be caught up” with the future passive tense *ἀρπαγησόμεθα* in 4:17. Doing this, Paul emphasizes the hopeful future of the believers and the dead together, and replaces the hopeless condition of the pagans with the hope of salvation, “obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (5:9b).

By the above examples from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-1, I have tried to show how, in Chapters 6 and 7 of this book, the author analyses and comments, helped by the works of well-known authors as George Kennedy, each paragraph of Paul’s letter in the perspective of the ancient funeral rhetoric. In the last chapter, 8, Ezra JaeKyung Cho presents the *Conclusion* of his book. The author also mentions the limits of the research, such as the relatively small range of the study, lack of research of how Paul employs methodological synthesis or discord between rhetorical approach and epistolary approach in 1 Thessalonians, lack of research on how funeral oratory could be applied in other Pauline letters, and general letters. Anyway, Cho proposes broader and deeper research of ancient funeral oratory and more exploring on how the genre of funeral oratory originated, developed, and related among the Athenian, the Roman, and Jewish funeral oration.

The present book is a P.h.D. thesis, with clear premises, evidence and conclusions, which lead to the purpose of the research - to prove the existence of ancient funeral oration elements in 1 Thessalonians - but also, an alethic, referential perspective would have been welcomed. For example, as far as Jesus’ parousia, its primary occurrence is based on a promise made by Christ Himself (Matthew 24:30-31, Luke 21:6-36, John 14:3; Acts 1:9-11). Generally, regarding any rhetorical approach, it is recommended to recognize, among the forms of a speech or text, its truth and authority value. In the case of Cho’s book, who probably considers his target audience familiar with Christian teachings, the approach focuses on the auditorium and its consolation, and its social-cultural dimension, and less on the referential dimension of the topics.

All things considered, the book provides significant support for all those interested in rhetorical criticism, who will find in Cho’s thesis a comprehensive list of references about funeral oratory. Researchers in theology will find out a large bibliography list about biblical interpretation and will benefit from a broad overview of the fascinating ancient world of rhetorical strategies and techniques. Christian preachers can find in this book new persuasive arguments for their sermons at funeral services, the book itself interpreting an excellent homiletical model for funeral speeches. For all readers, the book can also be seen as the solving of a difficult “puzzle” by Dr. Cho, as said by Ben Witherington. Finally, to those who are reluctant to the author’s new interpretation, I let Apostle Paul answer them: “Test everything and hold on to what is good”. (1 Thessalonians 5:21).



# LAS EMOCIONES EN LA ANTIGÜEDAD: INDIGNACIÓN Y ENVIDIA EN ARISTÓTELES Y ARISTÓFANES

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**Resumen:** El estudio de las emociones en la Antigüedad ha tenido en las últimas décadas una gran eclosión. En su desarrollo, la propuesta aristotélica de los afectos (πάθη) ("Libro II" de su *Retórica*) ha recibido una atención especial. En ese marco, se ha observado que la emoción de la 'indignación', tal como la define el Estagirita (un sentimiento doloroso producido por la percepción de una inmerecida prosperidad, *Retórica* 1387a8-9) no habría recibido por parte de los griegos el nombre que este le asigna (τὸ νευμεσᾶν). La objeción se funda, sobre todo, en los testimonios de las oraciones forenses (s. IV a.C.). Nuestra propuesta incorpora el testimonio de la comedia aristofánica a la discusión, ya que la indignación ha sido considerada por muchos (COOPER, GOLDEN, ROSENBLUM, entre otros) la emoción típica de la comedia.

**Palabras clave:** indignación; envidia; Aristóteles; Aristófanes; emociones

## Emotions in Antiquity: Indignation and Envy in Aristotle and Aristophanes

**Abstract:** The study of emotions in Antiquity has burst in the last decades. In its development, the Aristotelian systematization of affections (πάθη) ("Book II" of his *Rhetoric*) has received special attention. In this context, it has been noticed that the emotion of 'indignation', as it is defined by the Stagirite (a painful feeling produced by the perception of undeserved prosperity, *Rhetoric* 1387a8-9) would not have been named by the Greeks as he did it (τὸ νευμεσᾶν). The objection is founded, above all, on the testimonies of forensic speeches (4th century BC). Our proposal incorporates the testimony of Aristophanic comedy into the discussion, since indignation has been considered by many (COOPER, GOLDEN, ROSENBLUM, among others) the typical emotion of comedy.

**Keywords:** indignation; envy; Aristotle; Aristophanes; emotions



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## Indignación en Aristóteles

(τὸ νημεσᾶν)

Aristóteles fue el primero en destacar el componente cognitivo esencial de las pasiones y en determinar los factores sociales, culturales y psicológicos involucrados en ellas<sup>1</sup>. La lista estándar de las emociones básicas que provee en su *Retórica*<sup>2</sup>, sin

embargo, se limita a las respuestas afectivas relacionadas con la persuasión del oyente, las que pueden ser explotadas socialmente para influir en los otros disponiéndolos a favor o en contra para el propio provecho, es decir, las adecuadas para un tratado de oratoria<sup>3</sup>. Es más, en ese contexto, las emociones son uno de los tres modos propiamente retóricos de persuasión (ἐντεχνον πίστεις), esto es, los que dependen de la inventiva del orador, junto con la argumentación lógica (λόγος) y el carácter (ἦθος)<sup>4</sup>. Por fuera de la *Retórica*, el Estagirita se ocupa de las pasiones también en las éticas, sobre todo en

1 Las emociones surgen a partir de una consideración de naturaleza cognitiva; se ven provocadas por la interpretación que hacemos de las palabras y los actos de los otros, antes que por un estado o disposición internos. Cfr. ZINGANO (2003: 117): “On pourrait dire alors que l’emotion est, selon Aristote, une altération qui génère une tendance à partir d’une discrimination de la part du sujet. La discrimination inscrit ainsi l’emotion dans le registre des intentions”. Imposible dar cuenta de la ingente bibliografía que el estudio de las emociones en la Antigüedad ha generado en los últimos años. Sobre las emociones en Aristóteles, cfr. FORTENBAUGH (1975); BELFIORE (1992); COOPER (1996); LEIGHTON (1996); NUSSBAUM (1996); KONSTAN (2006); GARROCHO SALCEDO (2015); DOW (2015); sobre las emociones en la Antigüedad, cfr., entre otros, HARBSMEIER & MÖCKEL (2009); MUNTEANU (2011); CHANIOTIS (2012); CHANIOTIS & DUCREY (2013); SANDERS (2014); HARDER & STÖPPELKAMP (2016); CAIRNS & NELIS (2017); SANDERS & JOHNCOCK (2016); SPATHARAS (2019). Un completo desarrollo sobre los aspectos más relevantes de su problemática, en CAIRNS & FULKERSON (2015).

2 Ellas son: “cólera” (ὀργή II, 2), “calma” (πραότης II, 3), “amor” y “odio” (φιλία y μῖσος II, 4), “temor” y “coraje” (φόβος y θάρρος II, 5), “vergüenza” (αἰσχύνη II, 6), “gratitud” (χάρις II, 7), “piedad” (ἐλεος II, 8), “indignación” (νημεσᾶν II, 9), “envidia”

(φθόνος II, 10) y “emulación” (ζήλος II, 11). Define Aristóteles la pasión (πάθος) como “aquello por lo cual [los hombres] cambian y difieren con respecto a sus juicios (πρὸς τὰς κρίσεις), a lo cual le siguen pena (λύπη) y placer (ἡδονή)” (*Retórica* 1378a20-23). “Pena” y “placer” serían sensaciones (αἰσθήσεις) que acompañan a las emociones, e involucrarían tan solo un proceso físico-corporal. Para una revisión de los significados del término πάθος en Aristóteles, cfr. GRIMALDI (1988: 14-15). Para la *Retórica* seguimos la edición de Ross (1959). La traducción al español de todos los textos griegos es nuestra.

3 El Estagirita advierte que las cosas no se aprecian del mismo modo si se siente enojo (ὀργιζομένοις) que si se siente calma (πραώς ἔχουσιν) (*Retórica*. 1377b31-2), por ello las emociones se vuelven clave en el momento de convencer a los otros.

4 “De las pruebas provistas por el discurso hay tres especies: unas están en el carácter (ἐν τῷ ἦθει) del que habla, otras en el disponer de algún modo (διαθεῖναι πῶς) al que escucha y otras en el propio discurso, por medio de demostrar (διὰ τοῦ δεικνύναι) o parecer demostrar (φαίνεσθαι δεικνύναι)” (*Retórica* 1356a1-4).

la *Ética a Nicómaco*, aunque allí su interés se concentra en su relación con la moral y las virtudes<sup>5</sup>.

Para cada una de las doce emociones enumeradas en *Retórica*, Aristóteles precisa (i) por qué asuntos se suscitan, o (ii) en qué circunstancias (πῶς διακείμενοι), (iii) frente a quiénes (τίσιν) y (iv) por qué motivos (ἐπὶ ποίοις), es decir, el estado o condición psicológica de quien siente (*Retórica* 1378a23-4). Hoy en día los estudiosos de las emociones siguen procediendo de la misma forma, determinando un “escenario cognitivo” –así lo llama WIERZBICKA (1999)– o “libreto” –como prefiere denominarlo CAIRNS (2008)–, no otra cosa que una narrativa breve que acompaña las condiciones en que una emoción ocurre, así como la percepción

y apreciación de esas condiciones y las respuestas que de ellas resultan<sup>6</sup>.

Siguiendo este esquema, Aristóteles define la indignación (τὸ νεμεσᾶν) como “el sufrimiento (λυπεῖσθαι) ante quien aparece yéndole bien inmerecidamente (ἐπὶ τῷ φαινομένῳ ἀναξίως εὐπραγεῖν)” (*Retórica* 1387a8-9). Es, pues, una emoción dolorosa con un componente ético primordial, ya que exige la valoración del merecimiento o inmerecimiento de la prosperidad ajena. Este juicio moral en el interior mismo de la indignación es lo que la distingue de otras dos emociones emparentadas: la ‘envidia’ (φθόνος) y los ‘celos’ o ‘emulación’ (ζήλος). Las tres –indignación, envidia y emulación– provocan dolor (λύπη) ante la percepción de la prosperidad ajena, medida en términos de las cosas altamente valoradas que los otros poseen “como riqueza, poder y ese tipo de ventajas” (1387a13)<sup>7</sup>. La ‘envidia’ y la ‘emulación’ se parecen entre sí –y por ello mismo se distancian de la indignación–, porque implican una reacción frente a aquellos semejantes a nosotros (περὶ τοὺς ὁμοίους –“en estirpe, parentesco, edad, modo de ser, reputación o medios económi-

5 La mayoría de las emociones discutidas en *Retórica* están también en las listas que provee la *Ética a Nicómaco*: ἐπιθυμία, ὀργή, φόβος, θάρος, φθόνος, χάρα, φιλία, μῖσος, πόθος, ζήλος y ἔλεος (1105b21-23); αἰδώς, αἰσχύνη, νέμεσις y ἐπιχαιρεκακία (1108a30-b6); cfr. también *Ética a Nicómaco* IV.9. Obsérvese que aquí se incluye, dentro del conjunto de las emociones, los apetitos (ἐπιθυμία) como el hambre, la sed o el deseo sexual, algo que no sucede en *Retórica*, donde se restringe la lista a las emociones altamente cognitivas, que involucran un juicio y se relacionan con un argumento persuasivo (*Retórica* 1388b29-30); cfr. LEIGHTON (1996: 223-30). El hombre virtuoso, según Aristóteles, no debe buscar extirpar las emociones, sino darle su justa medida (μετριοπάθεια, 1105b28-29; 1108a30-b10): la posibilidad de la virtud moral se enraíza en el mundo de las emociones. Para la *Ética a Nicómaco* seguimos la edición de RACKHAM (1926).

6 La noción de ‘libreto’ captura un elemento esencial acerca de las emociones, esto es, el hecho de que sean actuadas socialmente y estén vinculadas con las reglas que gobiernan la interacción en la sociedad. Como advierte CAIRNS (2008), las emociones son parte de la dramaturgia de la vida de todos los días.

7 Cfr. *Retórica* 1386b11 (para la ‘indignación’), 1387b23 (para la ‘envidia’) y 1388a32-33 (para la ‘emulación’).

cos”– 1387b24-29)<sup>8</sup>. Asimismo, la envidia difiere de la emulación porque es inmoral, básica (φαῦλος) y característica de hombres de igual talante, mientras la segunda es virtuosa, noble (ἐπιεικής) y por ello característica de los hombres virtuosos y nobles (1388a35-36). En opinión del filósofo, se siente envidia simplemente porque los bienes pertenecen a otros –y, en ese sentido, es un sentimiento negativo–<sup>9</sup>, en cambio se siente emulación porque esos bienes que uno valora no son propios<sup>10</sup>. Dado que en español no percibimos la “emulación” como un sentimiento –aunque la RAE lo defina como un “deseo intenso de imitar e incluso superar las acciones ajenas”– y, por otra parte, tampoco nos parece oportuno traducir por ‘celos’ –aunque los celos indican el deseo de poseer lo que otros tie-

nen–, porque a menudo se atribuyen a quienes no desean compartir lo que ya poseen–, preferimos referirnos a ζῆλος como ‘sana envidia’, aquel sentimiento envidioso no malintencionado. Para decirlo de otro modo: el que siente φθόνος no quiere que el otro tenga lo que tiene sin ninguna razón aparente, en cambio, el que siente ‘sana envidia’ (ζῆλος), aprecia lo que otros tienen y por eso también quiere poseerlo, sin necesidad de verlos despojados de ello<sup>11</sup>.

En la *Ética a Nicómaco* la ‘indignación’ aparece relacionada también con la ‘malicia’ (ἐπιχαιρεκακία). Los tres afectos, ‘envidia’, ‘indignación’ y ‘malicia’, integran el sistema tripartito que identifica, en ese orden, el exceso, el justo medio y la deficiencia: se identifican por ser una respuesta emocional frente a lo que le sucede a los demás, pero se diferencian por el placer o dolor que suscitan. El que se indigna se aflige por los que prosperan inmerecidamente (ὁ μὲν γὰρ νεμεσητικός λυπεῖται ἐπὶ τοῖς ἀναξίως εὖ πράττουσιν), el envidioso, va un paso más allá, y siente dolor por la prosperidad de todos (ἐπὶ πᾶσι λυπεῖται) y el malicioso (ὁ δ’ ἐπιχαιρεκακός) se queda tan corto en afligirse que se alegra (χαίρειν) (1108b1-6) –no ante la fortuna, sino ante el in-

8 Los envidiados son también cercanos (τοῖς ... ἐγγύς) en el tiempo, el espacio, la edad y la reputación (1388a6-7). Que φθόνος sea una emoción que despiertan los próximos o los que se nos parecen está implicado en el pasaje de Hesíodo (*Trabajos y días* 25-6) –citado por Aristóteles *Retórica* 1388a14-17–, donde esa proximidad se vincula con el estatus social: “el alfarero envidia al alfarero, el obrero envidia al obrero, el mendigo envidia al mendigo y el aeda al aeda”.

9 La ‘emulación’ sería lo contrario de la ‘envidia’, “porque la envidia es ciertamente un dolor perturbador (λύπη ταραχώδης) y que concierne al éxito (ἐπὶ εὐπραγίᾳ), pero no del que no lo merece, sino del que es nuestro igual o semejante (τοῦ ἴσου καὶ ὁμοίου)” (1386b18-20).

10 “(...) la emulación (ζῆλος) es un dolor (λύπη) ante la presencia manifiesta de bienes estimados (ἀγαθῶν ἐντιμῶν) y susceptibles de ser alcanzados por uno (ἐνδεχομένων αὐτῷ λαβεῖν)” (1388a32-33).

11 SANDERS (2014) explicita que Aristóteles discrimina estas tres emociones en referencia a tres factores diversos: el ἦθος del que siente (bueno o malo), si el inmerecimiento del bien ajeno es relevante para despertar la emoción, y si el bien en sí mismo es específicamente deseado; “Each factor shows one emotion differing markedly from the other two” (SANDERS 2014: 61).

fortunio de los otros—. Se trataría, además, de un infortunio inmerecido porque, de lo contrario, estaríamos en presencia de un castigo justo, y, en ese caso, de ningún modo se provocaría una emoción intrínsecamente mala como califica Aristóteles a la ἐπιχαιρεκακία<sup>12</sup>. KRISTJÁNSSON (2006: 94-100) propone traducirla por ‘*Schadenfreude*’, que es lo más cercano a nuestra propuesta de traducción; SANDERS (2014: 63), en cambio, sostiene que mejor traducción es ‘*spite*’ (‘rencor’, ‘resentimiento’, ‘ojeriza’), porque se trata de una emoción que motiva a la acción<sup>13</sup>. Finalmente, en la *Ética a Eudemo* la narrativa adjudicada a la νέμεσις excede los límites de la que se brinda en *Retórica*<sup>14</sup>; se posiciona como el medio virtuoso entre el exceso que representa φθόνος y la deficiencia para la cual no hay nombre (1221a3, πάθος ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ ἀνώνυμον, 1233b21), aunque es la pasión atribuida al malicioso (ἐπιχαιρεκα-

κος), el que se alegra de las desgracias inmerecidas (1233b18-19).

Es bien claro el afán de Aristóteles por trazar relaciones, y límites precisos, entre estados emocionales próximos aunque de ningún modo homologables. Salvo contadas excepciones, el Estagirita le otorga un nombre propio a cada emoción, que vale como marca de identidad para no ser confundida. El trazado de paralelismos, o la determinación de tríadas como las que acabamos de señalar para la ‘indignación’, evidencian una clara búsqueda de simetrías. En tal sentido, el diseño de la cartografía aristotélica, extremadamente equilibrado, responde a, y está regido por, intereses variados. Ahora bien, no siempre este esquema estructural de meticulosa y cuidada distribución encuentra un preciso correlato en los testimonios literarios contemporáneos. Con la ‘indignación’, precisamente, nos topamos con este escenario. Para empezar, la denominación aristotélica –τὸ νεμεσᾶν– resulta peculiar y no menos curiosa. El hecho de que el filósofo se valga de un verbo sustantivado para denominarla se debería a la ausencia de un sustantivo específico que la designara. No debe resultar extraño, porque experimentamos más emociones que las que nombramos, así como el nombre de una emoción puede remitir a más de un afecto.

En efecto, no se registra la forma verbal sustantivada νεμεσᾶν por fuera del corpus del filósofo, aunque sí el sustantivo νέμεσις y las formas verbales de νεμεσᾶω sin sustantivar. KONSTAN (2006) ha postulado una

12 Para Aristóteles ἐπιχαιρεκακία (“malicia”), φθόνος (“envidia”), y ἀναισχυντία (“desvergüenza”), las tres, son intrínsecamente malas (*Ética a Nicómaco* 1108a35b6, 1107a8-12).

13 CERASUOLO (1996) identifica la ἐπιχαιρεκακία descrita por Aristóteles con la definición de φθόνος en el *Filebo* de Platón. Difieren, sin embargo, en tanto en Platón φθόνος es suscitado por amigos o gente cercana, mientras que ἐπιχαιρεκακία es suscitada por cualquiera.

14 Según la *Ética a Eudemo* (1233b24-25), lo que los antiguos llamaron ‘indignación’ (τὴν νέμεσιν) consiste en “sentir dolor por las desgracias y prosperidades inmerecidas (ἐπὶ ταῖς παρὰ τὴν ἀξίαν κακοπραγίαις καὶ εὐπραγίαις) y alegrarse ante las merecidas (ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀξίαις)”; seguimos la edición de WALZER & MINGAY (1991).

explicación para esta contingencia. Sobre la base de un amplio repertorio lexicológico diacrónico de la raíz  $\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\text{--}$  –extendido hasta el s. IV a.C.– observa que  $\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  es una forma arcaica para designar la ‘indignación’, y que, para la época clásica, ya se encuentra reemplazada por la palabra  $\varphi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$ , que pasó a designar indistintamente tanto el sentimiento noble de la ‘indignación’ como el menos recomendable de la ‘envidia’<sup>15</sup>. El mismo KONSTAN especula sobre las razones de esta traslación de significados, que, por otro lado, es un fenómeno muy común en todas las lenguas. De un lado, pudieron haber pesado razones histórico-sociales, como el cambio de valores en el nuevo mundo de las ciudades estado, del otro, la prominencia del culto local dedicado a la diosa Némesis –emblemática de la retribución divina– en el demo ático de Ramnunte, que habría obligado a restringir los usos de la palabra  $\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  que apuntaran a otros sentidos<sup>16</sup>.

15 KONSTAN (2006) registra 65 ocurrencias de  $\nu\epsilon\mu\epsilon\sigma\iota\varsigma$  y sus cognados (incluyendo textos fragmentarios), desde la época arcaica a la clásica (exceptuando los registros en Homero y Aristóteles). En diversos capítulos del libro editado por KONSTAN & RUTTER (2003) se advertía ya sobre el problema terminológico de la ‘envidia’. Cfr. también WALCOTT (1978).

16 KONSTAN (2006: 122): “It is true that, at least in democratic Athens, *phthonos* tended to be associated particularly with what we might call ‘upward resentment’, that is, the anger of the lower classes towards the rich, whereas in Homer, *nemesis* seems more often to express ‘downward resentment’ on the part of superior –whether gods or mortals– towards inferiors who overstep their station”. Aristóteles se haría

CAIRNS (2003: 247) también había registrado que en la oratoria forense se expresaban con la palabra  $\varphi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  diferentes pasiones, entre otras, la ‘indignación’, pero también los ‘celos’, o la ‘cólera’. Inclusive el mismo orador que reconoce en  $\varphi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  una emoción reprochable, en ciertos contextos, lo legítima como una emoción justa<sup>17</sup>. Las oraciones tribunales son testimonios muy valiosos para el estudio de la vida social de los griegos: dejan al descubierto la manipulación de los sentimientos no solo en el marco estrecho del juicio que se lleva a cabo, sino también en la vida política en general, en la cual entran en juego diferentes perspectivas sobre la naturaleza, la posibilidad y el deseo de igualdad social de los ciudadanos. No es extraño que en ese discurrir amplio  $\varphi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  tuviera un uso más ambiguo<sup>18</sup>.

Más recientemente, SANDERS (2014) ha ampliado y profundizado el tema y arriba a conclusiones similares: con  $\varphi\theta\acute{o}\nu\omicron\varsigma$  los griegos también designaban un tipo de ‘envidia buena’, coincidente con la narrativa de cau-

eco de la visión de los de su clase y, en esa dirección, considera la envidia un vicio endémico de la democracia, provocada por la prosperidad de los que se ven como iguales.

17 La observación se funda en ejemplos extraídos de Isócrates, Demóstenes o Iseo.

18 CAIRNS (2003: 251): “...envy is transmuted and manipulated in a contest of competing ideological constructions that reflect differing perspectives on the nature, possibility and desirability of political and social equality”. El autor se centra, desde un punto de vista político, en la manipulación que de la ‘envidia’ hacen los ricos en la oratoria, cuando explican la condena que sufren de parte de los pobres.

salidad que el Estagirita describe para νεμεσάν. Sobre la base de un repertorio muy amplio de fuentes, SANDERS se apoya sobre todo en los escritos jurídicos, y en otros testimonios de corte filosófico, como la *Retórica a Alejandro* (SANDERS 2014: 67ss.), atribuida a Anaxímenes de Lámpsaco, el otro tutor de Alejandro<sup>19</sup>. De los tres escenarios con los que Anaxímenes describe la percepción, evaluación y respuesta emocional relativos a φθόνος, uno de ellos, el primero, se corresponde con el que Aristóteles propone para la indignación: “Envidiar es cercano a odiar. [Los adversarios] en general serán envidiados –o suscitarán ‘indignación’ (φθονήσονται)– si mostramos que les va bien sin merecerlo (ἀναξίως αὐτοὺς εὖ πράττοντας)” (*Retórica a Alejandro* 1445a19-20)<sup>20</sup>. El mismo SANDERS

repara en otra evidencia, también de índole filosófica, un pasaje atribuido a Hipias de Élida (fr. 86 DK, 16 B), citado por Estobeo (3.38.2), en el que se diferencian dos tipos de φθόνοι, uno justo y otro injusto, según se dirija, respectivamente, hacia hombres malos que son honrados (τοῖς κακοῖς ... τιμωμένοις) o a buenos (τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς)<sup>21</sup>. Esta ‘envidia justa’ es la que se correspondería con la definición de la ‘indignación’ que provee Aristóteles. La cuestión no está zanjada. EIDINOW (2016) y más recientemente SPATHARAS (2019) han vuelto a tratar del tema, sobre todo para atender a cuestiones vinculadas con la incidencia no solo moral, sino política o ideológica de la envidia, y su manipulación en un contexto propicio como el de la democracia del s. V<sup>22</sup>. Más allá

19 Cfr. el comentario de CAIRNS (2003: 247) sobre este mismo pasaje. Sobre la base de una referencia de Quintiliano, *La Retórica a Alejandro* fue adjudicada a Anaxímenes de Lámpsaco (ca. 380-320). Es de un carácter más práctico y menos filosófico que la *Retórica* de Aristóteles y probablemente ambas sigan fuentes comunes; cfr. al respecto CHIRON (2007). Seguimos la edición de MIRHADY (2011).

20 Los otros dos escenarios de φθόνος contemplan la emoción dirigida hacia los que “no son, fueron ni serán desprovistos de algún bien, y los que nunca sufren –sufrieron o sufrirán– algún infortunio” (*Retórica a Alejandro* 1445a19-20). Al respecto se pronuncia SANDERS (2014: 77): “The emotion aroused in (a) is indignation, and that is made clear by the reference to desert (*anaxiōs*), making this emotion identical to that Aristotle calls *to nemesan*; the emotions in (b) and (c) respectively correspond to Aristotle’s description of *phthonos*, and the emotion he calls *epichairekakia*”.

21 Cfr. también los comentarios de EIDINOW (2016) sobre el mismo texto.

22 SPATHARAS (2019) enfatiza el uso ideológico de φθόνος en el discurso público; considera que la envidia del pueblo es una invención ideológica de las elites y una forma de vehiculizar la expresión agresiva de la superioridad. A partir de esta interpretación, explica la elección aristotélica de designar la indignación como νεμεσάν no solo como un ejercicio de claridad, sino debida a su visión desfavorable de la democracia inmoderada. La ‘indignación’, o ‘envidia legítima’ fue, desde su perspectiva, “democracy’s response to elites’ projective uses of dispositional envy, their response was both dramatic and confrontational. (...) In other words, democratic ideology picked up the gauntlet and, by modifying the criteria of application of *phthonos*, directed the sentiment against its ideological opponents” (SPATHARAS 2019: 157-158). EIDINOW (2016), por su parte, ofrece un repertorio muy amplio de definiciones de la ‘envidia’ –desde testimonios literarios



de los análisis que avalan la interpretación que hace de la ‘indignación’ una forma de ‘envidia’ –lo que implicaría que no fueran dos sentimientos distintos–, la ‘envidia propiamente dicha’ también presenta matices, signados por los diferentes contextos y las motivaciones psicológicas de los agentes participantes, dando lugar a solapamientos con sentimientos que hoy denominamos ‘resentimiento’, ‘celos’ o ‘rencor’, entre otros.

### ‘Indignación’ en Aristófanes

Coinciden los estudiosos de la comedia antigua en que la ‘indignación’ es su emoción más característica. Esta asociación entre afecto y género viene motivada y avalada por el propio Aristóteles, que describe la ‘indignación’ como el reverso de la ‘piedad’ (ἔλεος), el sentimiento trágico por antonomasia –expurgado junto con el temor (φόβος) en la catarsis–<sup>23</sup>.

arcaicos hasta la Suda– que no hacen sino avalar la tendencia de ver en esta emoción un sentimiento negativo.

- 23 Cf. *Poética* (1449b24-8): “Es, pues, la tragedia imitación de una acción seria y completa (πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας), de cierta amplitud, en lenguaje sazonado, separada cada una de las especies [de aderezos] en las distintas partes, actuando los personajes y no mediante relato (δρώντων καὶ οὐ δι’ ἀπαγγελίας), y que mediante la compasión y el temor (δι’ ἐλέου καὶ φόβου) lleva a cabo la purgación de tales afecciones (τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν)”. La piedad (ἔλεος), por su parte, es definida como algún tipo de dolor (λύπη τις) ante la presencia de un mal grave y doloroso de quien no lo merece (τοῦ ἀναξίου τυγχάνειν), que uno mismo creería poder

Al hecho de sentir piedad (ἐλεεῖν) principalmente se le opone lo que se llama sentir indignación (νεμεσᾶν). Porque, al dolor por las desgracias inmerecidas (ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναξίαις κακοπραγίαις) se opone –de algún modo y a partir del mismo carácter– el dolor por los éxitos inmerecidos (ἐπὶ ταῖς ἀναξίαις εὐπραγίαις). *Retórica* 1386b8-11

En efecto, ha sido una preocupación sostenida de la crítica reponer aquello que el Estagirita habría expresado acerca del género cómico en la *Poética II*. En un libro dedicado a determinar, desde la óptica aristotélica, las emociones expurgadas en la catarsis cómica, COOPER (1922) se pronuncia a favor del par ‘indignación’ y ‘cólera’, que se oponen al par de la piedad y el temor trágicos<sup>24</sup>. El tema también fue tratado por GOLDEN (1992: 91-5), quien coincide con Cooper en asignarle a la ‘indignación’ el rol de emoción típicamente cómi-

padecerlo o alguno de nuestros allegados. (*Retórica* 1385b.12-5).

- 24 Cfr. COOPER (1922: 66): “(...) if we must find in the list two emotions equally common with pity and fear, and specially capable of relief through comedy, why not take anger and envy? The analysis of anger and envy in the *Rhetoric* has many points of contact with that in the *Philebus*. They are, like pity and fear, intimately related; both are disturbing emotions; and their catharsis would amount to a form of pleasure as distinct as is the catharsis of the tragic emotion”. Advertimos que en fuentes antiguas, como las oraciones forenses, la ‘piedad’ no se opone a la ‘indignación’, sino a la ‘envidia’; según Aristóteles, ‘envidia’ y ‘piedad’ no podrían ser sentidas al mismo tiempo (*Retórica* 1387a3-5, 1388a27). Al respecto cfr. SANDERS (2014).

ca<sup>25</sup>. ROSENBLOOM (2012) y el ya citado SANDERS (2014) también aportaron lo propio al tema: el primero ha propuesto la ‘indignación’ junto con la ‘piedad’ y la ‘cólera’<sup>26</sup>, y el segundo tanto la ‘indignación’, como la ‘envidia’ propiamente dicha –con una connotación cercana al ‘resentimiento’–, ambos sentimientos englobados en el término φθόνος<sup>27</sup>. La única fuen-

te antigua que adjudica una emoción a la comedia es el *Filebo* platónico (47e-50b), y ella es φθόνος, una mezcla de dolor y placer provocada por la percepción de la ignorancia de los amigos en cuanto a sus limitaciones en lo que respecta, por ejemplo, al saber, la apariencia física o sus bienes. La definición platónica en el *Filebo* no responde al uso habitual de φθόνος y se ha asimilado al sentimiento de la ‘malicia’ o *Schadenfreude*, no sin generar debate<sup>28</sup>. Así definida, como observa MUNTEANEU (2011), la malicia cómica descrita en el *Filebo* parece adecuarse mejor al espectador de comedia nueva que al de comedia antigua<sup>29</sup>.

25 GOLDEN (1992) establece una teoría de la comedia aristotélica a partir de la propia *Poética*, descartando otras fuentes, como el *Tractatus Coislinianus*. Su concepción de la ‘indignación’ abarca tanto la definición de la *Retórica* como la de la *Ética a Eudemo*, donde la ‘indignación’ es una emoción tanto dolorosa como placentera. En relación al *Tractatus Coislinianus*, cfr. FERNÁNDEZ (2005). Recientemente TRIVIGNO (2020) vuelve sobre el tema, con la propuesta de una reconstrucción especulativa del relato aristotélico sobre la catarsis cómica, integrando las consideraciones de Platón (*Filebo*) y Aristóteles (*Retórica*). De acuerdo con su análisis, el sentimiento que busca despertar la comedia es φθόνος, una mezcla de ‘envidia’ –si se enfoca su aspecto doloroso– y ‘malicia’ –si se enfoca su aspecto placentero–, y descarta la νέμεσις. Señala que Aristóteles y Platón difieren en su enfoque de los envidiados: el primero sigue un criterio social, mientras el segundo pone por delante un criterio relacional. Sobre φθόνος en Platón y Aristóteles, cfr. MILLS (1985). Sobre la catarsis cómica también ha escrito SUTTON (1994); desde una perspectiva freudiana, señala, entre otros afectos, la ‘hostilidad’, el ‘miedo’, la ‘ansiedad’.

26 Para ROSENBLOOM (2012), las tres emociones forman parte de una forma compleja de placer, y las tres juegan un rol, junto con el ‘temor’, en la construcción de la democracia como un orden social y moral, reforzando el poder de las masas.

27 SANDERS (2014) parte de la base de que la comedia provee una válvula de escape para dar cabida a la hostilidad de una forma

no destructiva. El hecho de que políticos, generales y embajadores formen parte del blanco satírico del género precisamente apela al φθόνος del público por las ventajas y ganancias que su posición les concede. Ese φθόνος anexa varias emociones: la ‘envidia’ de los pobres hacia los que están mejor que ellos, ‘indignación’ ante abusos genuinos, y, según su interpretación y sin duda lo más discutible de su propuesta, una ‘envidia enmascarada como indignación’, “such as when the general emotional approach of the poor to the (potentially undeservedly) wealthy causes them to fixate on tiny peccadilloes with the same intensity as large crimes, or to be easily incited by prosecutors to find ‘Reds under the bed’” (SANDERS (2014: 109).

28 Cfr., entre otros, FREDE (1993), o WOOD (2007), que distingue entre ‘malicia’ y *Schadenfreude*. El Sócrates de Jenofonte (*Memorabilia* 3.9.8) considera que se siente φθόνος hacia los amigos, como señala Platón, pero lo describe como un dolor ante su buena fortuna (ἐπὶ ταῖς τῶν φίλων εὐπραξίαις).

29 La autora señala, oportunamente, que el personaje ridículo que lleva a la risa, de

Por otro lado, advertimos que no siempre se distinguen las emociones de los espectadores de las emociones que afectan a los propios personajes, ya sea planteando diferencias o discrepancias entre unas y otras, ya sea precisando los criterios para deslindarlas, si es que hay necesidad o posibilidad de hacerlo<sup>30</sup>. En defensa de esta omisión, podríamos aducir que la duplicidad propia del diálogo teatral –el cuadro enunciativo autónomo del intercambio dialógico de los personajes por un lado, y la representación como acto de enunciación en el que el autor se dirige al público, por el otro– dificulta separar las aguas, porque es el mismo discurso el que funciona en los dos planos<sup>31</sup>. Por otro

lado, la necesidad de que el público y el héroe cómico compartan intereses a los efectos de acompañar su proyecto de reforma, obliga a que también participen de aquellos sentimientos que comprometen una valoración de los actores sociales implicados. Pensemos que la trama de la comedia parte, la mayoría de las veces, de la recreación de una situación político-social que el auditorio reconoce parte de su experiencia de vida cotidiana. La necesidad de lograr una comunidad emocional que integre al héroe cómico, sus aliados y el público en un mismo sistema de sentimientos, parecería lo más atinente<sup>32</sup>. En ese marco, la ‘indignación’, una emoción altamente social y política, encaja perfectamente con lo que se busca, esto es, la evaluación y consecuente aprobación o condena de la forma de vida que llevan los otros.

El relevamiento del campo léxico emocional de la comedia de Aristófanes –único ejemplo de comedia conservada de la antigüedad griega– instruye acerca de la ausencia de toda mención directa al sentimiento de la ‘indignación’ a través del verbo *νεμεσάω*, o del sustantivo *νέμεσις*. *Prima facie*, se corroboraría que la propuesta terminológica de Aristóteles se monta en una elección totalmente idiosincrática para denominarla. Resta, entonces, explorar el concepto de *φθόνος*, y términos derivados, para determinar la variedad de narrativas en las que su mención ocurre, vincu-

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acuerdo con Platón, debe ser un ser débil que no pueda vengarse. Su estudio no se reduce al *Filebo* y examina otras emociones que también en la Antigüedad se asociaron con la comedia, como el ‘atrevimiento’, o la ‘falta de vergüenza’ (Platón, *República* 10.606cl-8). Aristóteles (*Política*, 1336b), por su parte, aprueba esta indecencia cómica, pero solo para el público maduro y no para los jóvenes.

30 Un autor como SANDERS (2015) diferencia expresamente la envidia “*onstage*” de la envidia de la audiencia, pero no queda claro, con respecto a esta última, con qué criterio escoge las escenas que, a su entender, la provocan; por otra parte, esa envidia no hace sino replicar la envidia de los personajes. Recordemos que *φθόνος*, según su análisis, incluye la ‘indignación’, una ‘envidia legítima’, enmascaradora del sentimiento de la ‘envidia genuina’.

31 Cfr. MAINGUENEAU (2005: 145): “*Le même discours fonctionne simultanément sur deux plans, il doit agir sur l’interlocuteur immédiat et sur le destinataire indirect (l’émouvoir, le faire rire... tout ce que l’on subsume sous la catégorie “plaire au public”)*”.

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32 Sobre el concepto de comunidad emocional, cfr. ROSENWEIN (2010).

lando con los significados culturales que evoca, para comprobar si la ‘indignación’ se presenta lexicalizada de esta manera en la comedia o, de lo contrario, determinar de qué otra forma se manifiesta, habida cuenta de que se ha sostenido que es la emoción que la caracteriza.

La selección y agrupamiento de los ejemplos de usos de φθόνος y términos relacionados, se basa en criterios morfosintácticos y semánticos y apunta al trazado del esquema que conforma (el orden interno de cada serie respeta la cronología de la producción aristofánica):

#### 1. φθονέω: imperativo negado / prohibitivo

(i) \*No me envidiéis (Μή μοι φθονήσῃτ’), señores espectadores, si, siendo un pordiosero, me pongo a hablar acerca de la ciudad en el interior de una comedia<sup>33</sup>. (*Acarnienses* 497-499)

(ii) Si alguna vez llega la paz y acabamos con nuestros sufrimientos, no nos envidiéis (μὴ φθονεῖθ’ ἡμῖν) por nuestros cabellos largos y porque nos limpiemos con el estrígilo<sup>34</sup>. (*Caballeros* 579-580)

33 Para la comedia de Aristófanes seguimos la edición de SOMMERSTEIN (1980-2001).

34 También podría interpretarse que ἀπεσπλεγγισμένοις, el participio con el que concluye esta oración, significara “por llevar una tiara”, ya que la palabra σπλεγγίς puede significar tanto el “estrígilo”, con el cual normalmente el atleta limpiaba su cuerpo, como “corona” (cfr. SOMMERSTEIN 1981: 176). En uno y otro caso se estaría aludiendo a un tipo de vida acomodada típicamente aristocrática, de modo que poco cambia escoger uno u otro significado.

(iii) Si yo nací mujer, \*no me envidiéis (μὴ φθονεῖτέ μοι) por eso, si soy capaz de dar mejores consejos que la situación presente. (*Lisístrata* 649-650)

(iv) No envidiéis a las jovencitas (μὴ φθόνει ταῖσιν νέαισι); porque la sensualidad reside en sus tiernos muslos y florece en sus pechos. (*Asamblea* 900-904)

\* “no os indignéis”

Los cuatros ejemplos reproducen, en su expresión prescriptiva, una fórmula que se funda en la concepción negativa de la naturaleza de la envidia, de su evaluación y de las expectativas de comportamiento que genera en el mundo griego. Por un lado, el hecho de que toda situación de prosperidad o buena fortuna despierta la envidia de los otros, sobre todo de los semejantes, como apunta Aristóteles. Por otro lado, la percepción del envidioso como un agresor y del envidiado como una víctima. Ambas ideas forman parte de los lugares comunes que describen el potencial de φθόνος para producir algún daño, ilustrado, entre otros, en la lírica de Píndaro, cuando se da por sentado que la victoria de los competidores en los juegos deportivos atrae indefectiblemente la envidia –humana y divina–<sup>35</sup>.

35 Sobre la ‘envidia’ en Píndaro, cfr. MOST (2003); EIDINOW (2016). Con todo, Píndaro reconoce que la envidia es mejor que la compasión (κρέσσον γὰρ οἰκτιρμοῦ φθόνος) (*Pítica* I, 83-4); la misma idea en Heródoto 3.52.18-9: φθονέσθαι κρέσσον ἐστὶ ἢ οἰκτιρεσθαι.

Ahora bien, aunque los cuatro pasajes reproducen una misma intención, la de controlar la experiencia emocional ajena, presentan algunas divergencias relevantes que detallaremos a continuación. En el ejemplo (ii), los caballeros que componen el coro de la comedia hacen referencia al tipo de vida placentera, lujosa y libre de preocupaciones de los aristocráticos –el largo de la cabellera es simbólica de la clase social a la que pertenecen. Ellos no harían sino aludir a la envidia de las masas hacia el estilo de vida acomodada de los *kalokagathoi*: a pesar de la igualdad que supone el gobierno democrático, las ventajas son solo para unos pocos. Se trata del tipo de envidia que ha sido descrita como ‘resentimiento’, un afecto que depende fuertemente de las condiciones socio-económicas de los involucrados. En (iv), una muchachita se enfrenta a una vieja con la cual disputa los favores sexuales de su también joven amante. En ese contexto, presume que la anciana envidia su juventud, aunque hay que admitir que esta última tiene la ley de su lado.<sup>36</sup> Ella infiere, detrás de la envidia,

la suposición del deseo de la vieja de poseer lo que ella tiene, un tipo de envidia muy cercana a los celos. En ambos casos queda fuera de toda consideración el merecimiento o inmerecimiento de lo envidiado. El último de los ejemplos, sobre todo, no admite lugar a dudas: aunque considerada un bien, la juventud en sí misma no aplica para ningún juicio ético *per se*.

Los ejemplos (i) y (iii) escriben en cambio una narrativa diferente. En el pasaje de *Acarnienses* (i) habla el protagonista Diceópolis y se dirige a los espectadores, a quienes les pide no ser envidiado, aun cuando se arroge la dignidad de aconsejar a los atenienses sobre asuntos públicos de la ciudad. Las observaciones que el mismo personaje añade en su enunciado, nos referimos a las frases “aunque mendigo” (πτωχὸς ὢν) y “en una comedia” (τρογῳδίαν ποιῶν), implican la suposición de que los espectadores lo consideraran indigno para llevar a cabo esa misión, ya sea por su condición de pordiosero –recordemos que lleva el disfraz de Télefo–, ya por hacerlo dentro en un género como la comedia<sup>37</sup>. A los versos transcritos,

36 Recordemos que la escena ilustra una de las controvertidas regulaciones que el estado comunista ginococrático impulsado por Praxágora promulga en *Asambleístas*, esto es, el derecho a las libres relaciones entre los sexos, estipulando que “primero habrá que llevarse a la cama a los feos y bajitos” (628-9). Lo que parece ser una norma de repartición justa para que nadie se quede sin lo suyo, en la práctica conducirá a la ruina. Se expone de cara al espectador la desesperación de un joven acosado por tres viejas decrépitas que lo quieren hacer suyo. SANDERS (2014: 121-122) también comenta

este pasaje y concluye que la emoción que lleva a la joven a acusar a la vieja de ‘envidia’ es la ‘indignación’: ambas, en realidad, creerían que tienen derecho de acostarse con el muchacho, una por naturaleza, por edad, la otra porque la ampara la ley. Se nos ocurre observar al respecto que una cosa es creer que se tiene derecho y muy otra creer que se es digno de merecerlo; Aristófanes disocia la idea de justicia de la de legalidad.

37 En esa dirección ha traducido SOMMERSTEIN (1980: 85) “*Be not indignant with me...*”, y MACÍÁ APARICIO (1993: 500) “No

les sigue aquella famosa aseveración de que “la comedia también conoce lo justo” (500)<sup>38</sup>. El pasaje de *Lisístrata* va por el mismo sentido; en él se da por sentado el reproche hacia las ancianas porque, siendo mujeres, se atreven a hablar en público y dar los mejores consejos. Hay, en estos dos casos, una evaluación de tipo ética que nos lleva a vislumbrar en este uso de φθονέω la emergencia del sentimiento de la ‘indignación’, como ocurre en otros testimonios literarios.

En todos los ejemplos, con la insinuación de ‘no sentir envidia’, e inclusive ‘indignación’, la comedia hace propios los estándares emocionales acerca de la inconveniencia de estos afectos<sup>39</sup>. Repararnos en que las víctimas comprenden su provocación en términos colectivos, no individuales, como representantes de un grupo social al que integran (los *kalokagathoi*, las mujeres, los personajes de comedia). El temor a la envidia ajena, o a la indignación, se asienta en el perjuicio latente que conllevan: subrayamos el hecho de que la ‘indignación’, aunque una emoción noble, es tan nociva como la ‘envidia’ si va dirigida hacia uno<sup>40</sup>. Y aunque nadie quiere

susitarlas, poco podría hacerse para evitarlas si, como admite Tucídides (2.45.1), alcanza a todos cuantos están vivos<sup>41</sup>, aunque estas peticiones a ponerles un freno mostrarían la esperanza de que no todo está perdido, al menos vale el intento del reclamo.

## 2. φθονέω: formas conjugadas y participiales

(i) No es posible que no sea por envidia (οὐχὶ φθονῶν) que acabaste con ellos, para que no se hicieran políticos. (*Caballeros* 879-880)

(ii) Si alguno, deseoso de ser taxiarco, rehúsa por envidia (φθονεῖ) que salgas a la luz, señora, en las batallas... (*Paz* 444-45).

(iii) Agatón, ya que rehúsas por envidia (φθονεῖς) a ofrecerte tú mismo, al menos préstame para este una tuniquita y un sostén. (*Tesmoforiantes* 249-251)<sup>42</sup>

(iv) Espanto de mujer, porque sientes envidia (φθονοῦσα) te salen esas palabras. (*Asambleístas* 1043-1044)

(v) Zeus obró de ese modo por envidia (φθονῶν) a los hombres. (*Pluto* 87)

me toméis a mal”, igual traducción que RODRÍGUEZ ADRADOS (1991: 46).

38 Τὸ γὰρ δίκαιον οἶδε καὶ τραγωδία (*Acarnienses* 500). El neologismo τραγωδία es acuñado por Aristófanes para designar el género cómico y subrayar su contraposición –y al mismo tiempo cercanía– con el género trágico. Cfr. *Acarnienses* 886, *Avispas* 650, 1537.

39 Cfr. FISHER (2003).

40 Con el correr del tiempo la envidia, y el envidioso, fueron vinculados con el daño

conocido como ‘el mal de ojos’ (“evil eyes”). EIDINOW (2016) registra ejemplos de esta fuerza dañina de la envidia en relación con la mirada, por ejemplo, en Esquilo (*Agamenón* 947; 468-70), y relaciona con el sentido de la βασκανία en la oratoria forense.

41 Los muertos, en cambio, despiertan elogios (φθόνος γὰρ τοῖς ζῶσι πρὸς τὸ ἀντίπαλον).

42 Cfr. οὐ φθονῶ, 252, en el mismo sentido: “No rehúso”.

(vi) Tanto aquel [Zeus] envidia (φθο-  
νει) a los buenos. (*Pluto* 92)

En estos pasajes se acusa a adversarios y opositores de obrar movidos por la envidia. Se trata de un uso similar al que registran los escritos jurídicos, en los que los oradores instrumentan la desarticulación de la acusación de los demandantes señalando a la envidia como responsable de sus motivaciones malintencionadas y sin fundamento<sup>43</sup>. El procedimiento resulta un lugar común en la disputa entre contrincantes. Estos ejemplos de comedia también tienen por finalidad desacreditar la conducta y dichos del otro.

En el ejemplo de *Caballeros* (i), el morcillero explica que Paflagón terminó con los prostituidos por envidia a que ocuparan su lugar<sup>44</sup>. En el ejemplo (iv), ahora es la vieja la que acusa a la joven de sentir envidia porque la ley la beneficia (cfr. 1.v). Los pasajes (ii) y (iii) registran la particular construcción del verbo φθονέω seguido de infinitivo, que suele traducirse por “rehusar por envidia”. En el ejemplo (ii), a nuestro modo de ver, se refleja

un sentimiento similar al ‘rencor’ o al simple ‘enojo’: es difícil adjudicar a un comandante de infantería el sentimiento de la ‘envidia’ con respecto a la diosa de la paz, a no ser que ella represente a todos los que se ven benedicidos con la ausencia de los conflictos bélicos, quienes serían entonces los verdaderos envidiados. En *Tesmoforiantes* (iii), la envidia adjudicada a Agatón parece no indicar el deseo de lo ajeno, ni siquiera el dolor por lo que otro posee, sino más bien las ansias de evitar compartir lo propio, una envidia avariciosa, posesiva<sup>45</sup>.

Los ejemplos (v) y (vi), por su parte, se hacen eco de la concepción tradicional que adjudica a los dioses el sentimiento de la envidia hacia los mortales afortunados; en ese desarrollo, la envidia de Zeus es paradigmática. Textos de variados géneros manifiestan el riesgo de sufrir la envidia divina<sup>46</sup>, que no puede evitarse ni predecirse, y crea una sensación de inseguridad, ignorancia y temor. No ha resultado fácil de comprender

43 Al respecto se expresa EIDINOW (2016: 126): “In these ways, the attribution of *phthonos* in law-court speeches in Classical Athens suggests a clear line of descent from the concerns of Pindar’s poetry. It is an emotion stirred up by those who see others succeed, which makes a person not only unwilling to offer acknowledgement of that success, but also desirous to see it destroyed, along with the ruination of any broader public recognition of that success”.

44 En la comedia aristofánica, es frecuente la asociación de la política –y los políticos (ὁῖτορες)– con la prostitución (cfr. también 423-8).

45 Una posible traducción podría ser ‘recelo’, un sentido que también sería adecuado para otros ejemplos.

46 La envidia adjudicada a los dioses es un concepto tradicional en el pensamiento griego (cfr. Hesíodo, *Trabajos y días* 42-105; Heródoto 1.32 –la instrucción de Solón a Creso, en la que describe a los dioses como proclives a la envidia (φθονερόν); cf. también 3.40, 7.46. EIDINOW (2016) comenta varios pasajes de Píndaro en los que se alude a la envidia divina. Entre otros, el pedido a Zeus de ser ἀφθόνητος (*Olímpica* 13.24), o de no causar φθόνος en los dioses (*Istmia* 7.39); cfr. también *Pítica* 8.72s. y *Pítica* 10.20). Sobre la envidia divina en general, cfr. LANZILLOTTA (2010).

entre los modernos, menos aún justificarla<sup>47</sup>. También podría considerarse un caso de avaricia: los dioses no estarían dispuestos a compartir lo que es suyo. Su situación podría asimilarse a los hombres poseedores de grandes fortunas, también proclives a la envidia, como señala Aristóteles, y no solo por miedo a ser privados de ellas, sino también porque otros puedan tener lo que reconocen como un privilegio propio.<sup>48</sup> Para CAIRNS (2003) la envidia divina resulta una proyección de la envidia de las masas hacia quienes ocupan una posición social elevada: Zeus serviría a los intereses de las masas frenando con su envidia el exceso de los superiores.

### 3. φθονερός ('envidioso') / ἐπίφθονος ("sujeto a la envidia") / ἄφθονος ("sin envidia"):

(i) Porque las cornejas graznan por envidiosas (φθονεραί). (*Caballeros* 1051)

(ii) No hay nada de envidioso (ἐπίφθονον) en vituperar a los malvados, sino que equivale a la honra hacia los buenos, si se lo considera con lógica. (*Caballeros* 1274-1275)<sup>49</sup>

47 Platón, en el *Fedro* (247a7), afirma que la envidia está "fuera del coro de los dioses" (ἔξω θεῶν χοροῦ).

48 Cfr. *Retórica* 1387b28-31; la traducción de φέρειν en este pasaje es clave para entender uno u otro sentido. SANDERS (2014: 54) identifica aquí un tipo de 'envidia posesiva', ligada a los 'celos'.

49 ἐπίφθονον es traducido por RODRÍGUEZ ADRADOS (1991) por "censurable", y por MACÍA APARICIO (1993) como "A nadie debe molestar", sin mención a la 'envidia'.

(iii) ¡Qué envidioso (φθονερός) y canalla eres! (*Tesmoforiantes* 757)

(iv) Y entonces, una artesana de la boca, una inquisidora de palabras, una suave lengua, desenroscándose, sacudiendo las riendas envidiosas (φθονερούς ... χαλινούς), discriminando las frases, pulverizará todo el trabajo de los pulmones. (*Ranas* 826-829)

(v) Porque proporcionaremos todo para todos, sin escatimar (ἄφθονα), de modo que cada uno parta borracho, coronado y con su antorcha. (*Asambleístas* 689-692)

Igual que en el discurso forense, donde la conducta del envidioso se asocia a la de un mal ciudadano, en la comedia, el epíteto emocional "envidioso" (φθονερός) opera como una forma de insulto. Como en los ejemplos precedentes (2), estamos en presencia de un mecanismo retórico para estigmatizar al oponente, aunque en estos se ve con más claridad la finalidad de beneficiarse uno mismo configurando los hechos de una manera particular a su favor, como modo de defensa. Las palabras de Paflagón (i) advierten a Demo que el morcillero –la "corneja" de su discurso– acusa por envidia; es su modo de defenderse y no dar crédito a lo que su opositor aduce. De la misma forma, en *Ranas*, se afirma que el elaborado discurso de Eurípides ataca por envidia el arte de Esquilo (iv).<sup>50</sup> En el

50 En el contexto de una oda del coro, previa al agón, se presenta el particular estilo discursivo de Eurípides, que atacará al arte de Esquilo, caracterizado en la cita como "el trabajo de los pulmones", en concordancia



ejemplo (iii), Mica atribuye envidia al pariente de Eurípides, que corta el odre de vino que ella ha hecho pasar por su hija: muy poco podrá recoger de lo que cae de su interior. Recordemos que para Aristóteles el envidioso es lo contrario del hombre virtuoso, y, en consonancia, la tipificación de un ἦθος (cf. SANDERS 2014: 87); refuerza la caracterización individual.

Significativamente, los ejemplos (ii) y (v) están relacionados con la poética del género cómico. En ambos casos la idea que subyace es la de negar cualquier relación de la comedia, y sus procedimientos cómicos, con el sentimiento de la ‘envidia’. En *Caballeros* (i) se refuta toda vinculación causal entre la envidia y uno de los recursos cómicos más habituales, el de vituperar a los malvados (Λοιδορῆσαι τοὺς πονηροὺς). En (v), la utopía cómica, concretamente el proyecto de Praxágora en *Asambleístas*, procurará la abundancia plena, que vuelve improcedente toda conducta envidiosa (ἄφθονα): no habrá cabida para retener lo propio o envidiar lo ajeno. No hay rastros de la ‘indignación’ en ninguno de los ejemplos consignados en este grupo.

#### 4. φθόνος e infinitivo de φθονέω:

- (i) Abigarradas mantas, finas capitas, túnicas costosas y joyas de oro, todo

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con la fuerza de sus palabras, asimiladas previamente a la furia de un huracán o tornado que derriba lo que encuentra a su paso (824). La imagen que subyace en este pasaje es la de una carrera de caballos o carros.

cuanto tengo, no siento envidia (οὐ φθόνος ἔνεστί μοι) en permitirles a todos que se lo lleven para sus hijos, o para cuando alguno tenga una hija canéfora<sup>51</sup>. (*Lisístrata* 1189-1193)

(ii) Oh viejo, viejo, escuché la censura que proviene de tu envidia (τοῦ φθόνου μὲν τὸν ψόγον), pero no sentí ningún dolor. (*Tesmoforiantes* 146-147)

(iii) Ni robar vestidos, ni envidiar (φθονεῖν) a los vecinos, ni ir desnudos, ni ser pobres, ni calumniar, ni tomar nada en prenda. (*Asambleístas* 565-6)

En el ejemplo (ii) de *Tesmoforiantes*, Agatón se declara inmune a los efectos de la censura envidiosa del pariente de Eurípides –este se ha burlado de su apariencia andrógina–, y no siente ningún dolor (τὴν δ’ ἄλγησιν) al respecto. Interesante comparar este pasaje con el 3(II) ya comentado, porque, leídos en conjunto, dejan en evidencia que cualquier reproche, si es provocado por la envidia, pierde todos sus efectos. En este ejemplo entra en juego un tipo de envidia que se solapa con los celos y repite la retórica tribunalcia de endilgarle envidia al interlocutor para desvalorizar su discurso.

Los dos ejemplos restantes, los últimos de nuestro repertorio, se vinculan con la ejecución de la utopía cómica, con los bienes que esta despacha, y la satisfacción, corporal, y espiritual, que provee. En *Lisístra-*

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51 El coro ofrece adornos y vestimentas costosas y llamativas, típicas de los festivales religiosos como los de las Panateneas.

ta (i) el coro de ancianos y ancianas reconciliados entona una oda de celebración, una vez que una tregua ha sido acordada entre atenienses y espartanos. Narran las consecuencias inmediatas de la reconciliación –en el tiempo mágico de la comedia todo ocurre en un abrir y cerrar de ojos–. La plenitud y abundancia materializada en la posesión de bienes suntuosos impacta también en las afecciones del alma: la envidia desaparece y en su lugar reina la generosidad de donar lo propio a los hijos ajenos. El pasaje (iii) remata esto que venimos señalando. Se cuenta entre los propósitos de la utopía acabar de plano con el sentimiento de la envidia. En la economía emocional de la pieza alcanza la envidia un rango llamativo porque en ella Aristófanes cifra uno de los males de Atenas, enumerado, en este pasaje, entre las acciones vergonzosas (αἰσχρὰ δρᾶν) que Praxágora procura eliminar con su agenda de reforma comunista<sup>52</sup>. Es muy coherente que, en un régimen que acaba con las posesiones privadas a favor de compartir todo en comunidad, la envidia no tenga ya una razón de ser<sup>53</sup>.

52 Cfr. *Edipo en Colona* (1234-1235), en que φθόνος aparece también formando parte de una lista de males, todos ellos violentos: “asesinatos, luchas intestinas (στάσεις), discordia, combate y envidia”.

53 En *Asambleístas*, SANDERS (2014) reconoce que φθόνος resulta un tema recurrente, aunque menor, pero como reacción de los que se oponen al plan de Praxágora y no quieren compartir sus bienes, o el sexo, no como una emoción que se le impute a la heroína o a sus aliados.

Ahora bien, si, como hemos demostrado a través de la serie de ejemplos comentados, no es φθόνος la palabra que designa la ‘indignación’ en la comedia –ya que donde podría verse mencionada es atribuida a los otros, se presenta tan indeseada como la envidia, y además se supone infundada, es decir errónea, en opinión de quienes la generan–, se vuelve imprescindible detectar los libretos o narrativas que, en el nivel interpretativo, den cuenta de los procesos de evaluación cognitiva que enfrentan los héroes cómicos y sus asociados en relación con sus experiencias subjetivas ante las situaciones planteadas en el contexto social que la comedia refleja. Es decir, evaluar la interacción entre los procesos ‘mentales’ de los personajes y los eventos sociales en los que participan<sup>54</sup>. Y, en este desarrollo, nos encontramos con un libreto recurrente, con una amplitud limitada de motivaciones que explican por qué los personajes actúan como actúan, coincidente con el contexto descrito por Aristóteles para la ‘indignación’, estrechamente relacionado con el orden moral de la sociedad sobre la que se juzga la

54 Nuestro abordaje considera que las emociones son construcciones socio-culturales, vinculadas con contextos específicos que son los que hemos tratado de determinar, es decir, nuestra perspectiva es cercana a un constructivismo social antes que psicológico. Al igual que la propuesta de estudio de EIDINOW (2016), nuestra atención se ha centrado en las emociones concebidas como energía conceptualizada socialmente, en el marco de patrones familiares que comprenden narrativas tanto verbales como físicas.

experiencia subjetiva. La recurrencia habla a favor de un patrón emocional legitimado por la jurisdicción propia del género, que está en estrecha relación con el patrón funcional de la trama cómica (SOMMERSTEIN 1980), que parte de una denuncia del héroe en el marco de la exposición del estado de insatisfacción en el que se encuentra sumergido. La percepción de algún tipo de injusticia aparece como un componente fundamental en la regulación narrativa del género<sup>55</sup>, y esa acusación participa, en casi todos los casos, de una imputación más general acerca del injusto orden socio-político vigente, manifiesto en el hecho de que, en la Atenas de la época, solo tiene éxito el que no lo merece. La reacción del héroe cómico, primero emocional y luego de agenciamiento práctico, se recuesta en el marco ético de su denuncia que justifica los medios y alcances desestabilizadores de sus reformas sociales. Raramente el protagonista permanece ensimismado en su desgracia, porque su atención se redirige a la vida de los otros, no solo de aquellos que comparten sus mismos problemas, sino, sobre todo, de aquellos cuyas vidas experimentan una suerte contraria a la suya, quienes además suelen ser también responsables de su desgracia.

La expresión más clara de esta situación de injusticia que da lugar a la

indignación del protagonista la encontramos sin duda en *Pluto*, la última comedia conservada de Aristófanes, que, aunque considerada por muchos un caso de comedia media, sin embargo preserva la estructura y la temática propias de la comedia antigua. En ella, el campesino Crémilo consulta el oráculo de Apolo, en Delfos, para ver qué tipo de vida debe seguir su hijo, ya que, “Siendo un hombre piadoso y honrado, la pasaba mal (κακῶς ἔπραττον) y era pobre (πένης ἦν) (...) pero los otros, los políticos sacrílegos, eran ricos (ἐπλούτουν), igual que los delatores y los malvados” (*Pluto* 28-31). Esta injusta ecuación que asocia la prosperidad económica con la maldad puede reconocerse, con matices, en casi todas las obras del comediógrafo, especialmente en las que se centran en cuestiones de la vida política ateniense. En *Caballeros*, por ejemplo, la situación también se plantea de modo parecido: en la casa de Demos –personificación del pueblo ateniense–, dos de sus servidores elevan sus quejas ante los infortunios que les ha ocasionado la llegada de un nuevo esclavo, Paflagonio –personificación alegórica del demagogo Cleón–<sup>56</sup>. Desde entonces las desgracias caen sobre ellos, porque los favores del amo se dirigen solo al advenedizo, que se la pasa comiendo, bebiendo y durmiendo boca arriba<sup>57</sup>.

55 La tragedia, por el contrario, exhibe una negativa a producir actos justos; busca algo que precisamente trascienda la justicia –como el sacrificio o el perdón–; para las jurisdicciones trágicas y cómicas, cfr. KERTZER (2010).

56 Los esclavos han sido identificados con los generales Demóstenes y Nicias; cfr. TAMMARO (1991).

57 Cfr. vv. 1-5: “Servidor 1: ¡Ay, ay, qué desgracia, ay, ay! Ojalá los dioses acabaran con el Paflagonio, esa peste recién comprada, víctima de sus designios. Es que desde que

Paflagonio ha logrado ser el preferido con estratagemas poco limpias, como mentir aduciendo la existencia de oráculos que lo favorecen (61, 1051-3.), adjudicándose para sí lo que otros hacen (52-4), mintiendo para parecer el mejor (63), calumniando (ψευδῇ διαβάλλει, 64, cfr. 447), chantajeando (δωροδοκεῖ 66), engañando con adulaciones (ἐκολάκευ', ἐξηπάτα 48). Acepta sin más los sobornos (438-9), entabla juicios (Διώξομαι σε 368), se autodeclara un descarado ("No me superaréis en desvergüenza" Οὐτοί μ' ὑπερβαλεῖσθ' ἀναίδεια, 409), y tramposo (695)<sup>58</sup>. Esta comedia es una ataque sostenido contra Cleón y no hay resquicio para que quepa la menor duda de que no merece el lugar de pri-

entró en la casa no para de hacernos moler a palos a los servidores".

- 58 De estos ejemplos también se vale SANDERS (2014: 119ss.), pero para ilustrar la 'envidia' y no la 'indignación' de los esclavos Nicias y Demóstenes. Desde su perspectiva, si bien el lenguaje es ciertamente el de la indignación (o "buena envidia", como él la llama), según la psicología subyacente ("*underlying psychology*"), entiende que obran por 'resentimiento', y también por 'celos', en tanto Demos se ha ido con otro esclavo y quieren evitar que este ocupe un lugar en la casa. SANDERS (2014: 210) termina admitiendo la presencia de la 'indignación' –a nuestro modo de ver lo único evidente– junto con la 'envidia': "*That is not to say that there is no genuine indignation ('good phthonos') there too –people can react to situations with more than one emotion– but their intended solution makes clear that transmuted jealousy ('bad phthonos') is dominant*". También adjudica el sentimiento de φθόνος a Paflagón, sobre todo sobre la base de sus falsas acusaciones, sus calumnias, que, como queda sentado en la oratoria, se relacionan con la envidia.

vilegio que ocupa en la casa, ni como esclavo en el plano literal, ni, en el plano metafórico, como político. Podemos agregar, en esa dirección, otros ejemplos, como el de *Avispas*, que reproduce las mismas denuncias de *Ca-balleros*, a través de Bdelicleón, que advierte a su padre, un fanático heliasta y adherente de Cleón, que son los políticos los únicos que obtienen ganancias (666-7), a costa de empobrecer a los jueces (βούλονται γὰρ σε πένητ' εἶναι, 703), que los defienden y creen verse en ellos representados. Los demagogos aceptan sobornos (669), y se burlan de los jueces (καταγελῶμενος, 515), a los que hacen sus esclavos (516, 518, 681)<sup>59</sup>. Según plantea el escenario, Bdelicleón busca despertar la indignación en su padre, y por traslación en la audiencia, dejando en evidencia el carácter justo de su acusación. La inclusión de los políticos dentro de la clase de los "nuevos ricos" –Cleón es un próspero curtidor de cuero; Hipérbolo, vendedor de lámparas; Cleofonte, un fabricante de flautas–, favorece y hasta potencia la provocación de la indignación en el pueblo. Explica Aristóteles que hacia ellos "se siente más indignación (μᾶλλον νευμεσᾶν), pues más pesar causan (μᾶλλον γὰρ λυποῦσιν) los nuevos ricos que los

- 59 Es *Avispas* otra de las comedias escogidas por SANDERS (2014) para analizar las emociones en la audiencia. Repite aquí el mismo esquema: la 'indignación' es, a su modo de ver, solo una pantalla para esconder el verdadero sentimiento: la envidia mala –"*The language is that of indignation; but the line between 'good' and 'bad' phthonos has been blurred almost to nothing*" (SANDERS 2014: 110).

que lo son de antiguo por linaje familiar (διὰ γένους)”, porque su riqueza no se percibe como algo natural (φύσει) (Retórica 1387a18-19)<sup>60</sup>.

Con la concreción de la utopía, finalmente, se deshace la viciosa ecuación que vincula la fortuna, la bonanza en general, con el inmerecimiento. La serie de escenas ilustrativas que en muchas comedias ocupa toda su segunda parte tiene por finalidad certificar que este quiebre se ha producido y dar a conocer sus consecuencias. Los antes afortunados reciben su castigo, lo que en muchos casos implica simplemente adoptar un nuevo estilo de vida y en otros su expulsión de la ciudad o de la faz de la tierra. Por ejemplo, en *Paz* los vendedores de armas se han empobrecido porque ya nadie se interesa en sus productos; en *Pluto*, un delator ha perdido repentinamente su riqueza, en *Aves*, un vendedor de decretos es echado a los golpes de la nueva ciudad entre las nubes. Todo ello ocurre gracias al compromiso emocional del héroe, que es el promotor del cambio social que recompone la relación entre la buena fortuna y la moral, volviéndola justa. La comedia no le pone nombre a esta emoción, pero le niega el de φθόνος y deja bien en claro que su agenda es justiciera, que la justicia está de su lado. Aristóteles dirá lo

demás: son los proclives a la indignación (νεμεσητικοί), los que “juzgan bien y odian la injusticia (κρίνουσιν τε γὰρ εὖ, καὶ τὰ ἄδικοα μισοῦσι)” (Retórica 1387b9).

### Algunas conclusiones

La comedia es un género profundamente ético: conoce lo que es justo, denuncia las injusticias y procura enderezar Atenas haciendo de ella una sociedad más ecuánime. Su héroe toma las riendas de una transformación que implica un cambio político-social de grandes dimensiones: involucra la redistribución –tanto de bienes como de males–, la atribución de recompensas y la ejecución de castigos<sup>61</sup>. En ese marco situacional, la indignación deviene la fuerza emocional capaz de impulsarlo. Nacida de un sentimiento de impotencia, hecha cuerpo en el héroe, penetra la esfera pública como un motor de acción y reclamo social. Nunca aparece nombrada, ni siquiera como φθόνος –se presume que se quiere evitar así todo atisbo de ambigüedad. Sin embargo emerge de las entidades discursivas que coinciden en su descripción con el escenario cognitivo que Aristóteles suscribe como libreto básico de su provocación y manifestación. Es natural que en la economía emocional de la comedia sea la indignación –asociada con un ἦθος noble

60 Aristóteles se refiere precisamente a los hombres de la política recientemente enriquecidos cuando alude a “los nuevos ricos que mandan a consecuencia de su riqueza (οἱ νεόπλουτοι ἄρχοντες διὰ τὸν πλοῦτον)” y que causan más ‘indignación’ que los “viejos ricos” (οἱ ἀρχαῖοπλουτοι) (Retórica 1387a 23-4).

61 Hemos desarrollado *in extenso* la estrecha relación de la comedia con lo justo y la justicia en FERNÁNDEZ (2015).

o bueno, como indica Aristóteles<sup>62</sup> la emoción caracterizadora del héroe y sus asociados, y no la envidia (φθόνος), un sentimiento inapropiado para un buen carácter –típica de los φαῦλοι (*Retórica* 1388a36)–. La *Ética a Eudemo* (1234a30-1) divide claramente las aguas: mientras φθόνος contribuye a la injusticia (εἰς ἀδικίαν συμβάλλεται), la ‘indignación’, por el contrario, contribuye a la justicia (εἰς δικαιοσύνην).

Sin embargo la ‘envidia’ también tiene un lugar en la comedia, pero limitado, para descalificar las actitudes de los adversarios, un instrumento más para desautorizar sus reclamos e invalidar sus razones. Reproduciendo el mismo uso retórico que de él hace la oratoria forense, el adjetivo φθονερός se pronuncia como un mote emocional con una evidente fuerza denigradora –no hay dudas de que los griegos percibían la envidia como una emoción moralmente reprensible. No sería exagerada la apreciación de Aristóteles que lo considera el único sentimiento inapropiado en toda circunstancia. Desde nuestra perspectiva de análisis, poco cuenta la sinceridad, o insinceridad, de tales atribuciones; nuestro interés ha estado en comprender cómo el género negocia sus emociones y legisla sobre su jurisdicción emocional.

En ese derrotero, la comedia impone a su público la necesidad de reflexionar acerca de la relación de aquello que los ciudadanos son con

aquello que se merecen, es decir, los motiva a sentirse indignados: la indignación es una emoción susceptible de mover a la opinión pública. Como es un género con una agenda política manifiesta, procura que el auditorio esté de su lado asegurando el carácter justo de su reclamo e involucrándolo en el mismo compromiso ético. Con esos propósitos busca generar una comunidad emocional al tiempo que cumple, de esta forma, con la función educadora que tanto pregona, porque las emociones se comparten y también se aprenden. Las emociones juegan un rol importante en la formación del orden moral y en el establecimiento de normativas; en esa dirección, el autor de comedia educa a su auditorio y lo (in)forma emocionalmente<sup>63</sup>.

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62 Cfr. *Retórica* 1386b11–12: “Ambas emociones [‘piedad’ e ‘indignación’] son propias de un carácter noble (ἡθους χρηστοῦ)”; cfr también 1386b33–87a1.

63 El artículo fue realizado en el marco del Proyecto “Pensar las emociones en la Atenas democrática: diálogo entre la comedia y la filosofía (PATHE)”; Programa LOGOS de ayudas a la investigación en Estudios Clásicos (Fundación BBVA). También se vincula con las actividades desarrolladas dentro del PIP 530 CONICET: “Palabras, cuerpos, objetos: soportes discursivos y materiales de las emociones en la comedia griega”.

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## ORIGINAL ARTICLE

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# Dynamis and Energeia in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*

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**Abstract**

This paper offers an interpretation of Aristotle's concepts of *dynamis* and *energeia* (commonly translated as potentiality and actuality) and of the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX. I first raise the question of where motion fits in Aristotle's categories and argue that the *locus* of motion in the system of categories are the categories of doing and suffering, in which case *dynamis* and *energeia* in respect of motion can also be understood as the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering. Next, I argue that the analogy that Aristotle draws in IX.6 is an analogy between the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering and the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance. Finally, I try to show that it is this analogy between the kinetic and nonkinetic variants of *dynamis* and *energeia*—and not the distinction between end-inclusive and end-exclusive activities—that provides the key to understanding the structure of *Metaphysics* IX.

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

In the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle states several times that being is said in many ways. According to Aristotle, being has four general senses, one of which subdivides into eight (or however many categories there are).<sup>1</sup> The four general senses of being are (i) accidental being, (ii) being as said of the categories, (iii) being as *dynamis* and *energeia* (often translated as potentiality and actuality), and (iv) being as truth. This paper explores one of the ways in which (ii) and (iii) are related: I argue that Aristotle draws an analogy between the *dynamis* and *energeia* pertaining to the categories of doing and suffering and the *dynamis* and *energeia* pertaining to the category of substance. Because their interpretation is precisely what is at stake, I will leave the terms *dynamis* and *energeia* untranslated for the most part of this paper.

Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* IX with a discussion of *dynamis* and *energeia* “in respect of motion” (*kata kinēsin*), adding immediately that there is more to *dynamis* and *energeia* than this “kinetic” sense, that “*dynamis* and *energeia* extend further (*epi pleon*) than the mere sphere of motion” (IX.1, 1046a1–2).<sup>2</sup> The text therefore implies a fourfold distinction between (i) *dynamis* in respect of motion (*dynamis kata kinēsin*), (ii) *energeia* in respect of motion (*energeia kata kinēsin*), (iii) *dynamis* that extends further (*dynamis epi pleon*), and (iv) *energeia* that extends further (*energeia epi pleon*). Later in the text (IX.6, 1048a36–1048b4), Aristotle offers the following analogy: what (i) is to (ii) is what (iii) is

to (iv). This much is agreed by most commentators. What I would like to add to this is that both the *kata kinēsin-epi pleon* distinction in IX.1 and the analogy in IX.6 have a *categorical* basis.

I argue for this interpretation by discussing passages where motion is treated as a category of its own—namely, as a joint name for the categories of doing and suffering—and I suggest that this would explain why Aristotle refers to *dynamis* in respect of motion subsequently as the *dynamis* of doing and suffering. Next, I examine passages in IX.3 and XII.4–5 where the role of the categories is explicit, which passages therefore provide further support for the interpretation according to which, as Makin puts it, *dynamis* and *energeia* “apply analogously in different categories” (Makin, 2006, p. 129; emphasis in the original). Building on these insights, I try to emphasize the role of the categories in understanding the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX, in which book, I argue, Aristotle begins with the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering and proceeds to the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance. I argue finally that despite what has been maintained by several scholars, Aristotle's division of activities into those that are end-inclusive and those that are end-exclusive does not pertain directly to the *kata kinēsin-epi pleon* distinction in IX.1 and the analogy in IX.6.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 | MOTION AS DOING AND SUFFERING

In the central books of the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle examines the different senses of being. Since one of the four senses of being is being as *dynamis* and *energeia*, Aristotle devotes much of *Metaphysics* IX to its analysis. The book begins with a discussion of *dynamis* and *energeia* “in respect of motion” (*kata kinēsin*), but the text does not offer a clarification of this phrase. What Aristotle does tell us here is that there is more to *dynamis* and *energeia* than this “kinetic” sense, that “*dynamis* and *energeia* extend further than the mere sphere of motion” (IX.1, 1046a1–2).<sup>4</sup> Aristotle states moreover that this kinetic type of *dynamis* and *energeia* is not the most useful, in the sense that it is not what is truly being sought (IX.1, 1045b36–1046a1). Later in the text, Aristotle offers an analogy (IX.6, 1048a36–1048b4), which shall be examined in Section 5 of the paper. Because the *kata kinēsin-epi pleon* distinction in IX.1 and the analogy in IX.6 involve a contrast between the kinetic and nonkinetic variants of *dynamis* and *energeia*, however, we must address the question of what it means for *dynamis* and *energeia* to be kinetic.

In the *Physics* and the *Metaphysics*, Aristotle provides a definition of motion<sup>5</sup>—the *entelecheia* of the *dynaton* as such (commonly translated as “the actuality of what is potential as such”)—which is a definition that applies equally to the four motions (generation/corruption, alteration, growth/diminution, and locomotion).<sup>6</sup> For example, building is a motion that can be understood as the *entelecheia* of the buildable *qua* buildable (*Physics* III.1, 201a16–18). Likewise, the *entelecheia* of the healable as such is healing. This definition of motion has been much debated in the literature, but I will not discuss it here for the following reasons. First and foremost, the *definiens* consists of the very terms that I am trying to understand in the present study, so to examine the definition of motion would be, for my purposes, to put the cart before the horse.<sup>7</sup> Second, the precise interpretation of Aristotle's definition of motion is orthogonal to the question of where motion fits in Aristotle's categories, and it is this question that the present study aims to focus on. Note, for example, that commentators sometimes debate whether Aristotle's definition of motion should be understood as the actuality of what is potential as such or as the actualization of what is potential as such, but I would like to stress that whatever the case may be, one may still raise the question concerning the *locus* of this actuality or actualization in the system of categories. Brentano's discussion of motion is a case in point. In his doctoral dissertation, he provides a lengthy discussion of the different ways in which one can interpret Aristotle's definition of motion (Brentano, 1975, pp. 34–48), but his later claim that motion is factually identical to the categories of doing and suffering (Brentano, 1975, p. 87) is extraneous to the aforementioned interpretations.

Where does motion fit in the system of categories? For example, a horse is a substance, a size is a quantity, and a color is a quality,<sup>8</sup> but what about motion? On the face of it, this does not seem to be a difficult question because there are a few passages that suggest that motion is a category of its own. Granted, motion is not included in the canonical list of categories, not even in the *Categories* (1b26–7) and the *Topics* (103b22–4) where we find the most complete list of the categories. Nonetheless, there are several passages that include motion among the categories. Before proceeding further, let us take a closer look at these passages.

In *Metaphysics* VII.4, Aristotle writes: “But since there are compounds of substance with the other categories (for there is a substrate for each category, e.g., for quality, quantity, time, place, and motion), we must inquire whether there is a formula of the essence of each of them” (1029b22–25). Here the inclusion of motion among the categories may seem surprising, but more surprising still is another passage where Aristotle offers a bifurcation of motion into *kinein* (moving) and *kineisthai* (being moved): “For being, as we have divided it in other works, signifies now what a thing is, now quality, now quantity, now time, and again some of it consists in *kineisthai* and *kinein*” (*Eudemian Ethics* I.8, 1217b27–29).<sup>9</sup> According to Menn, in these and several other passages, motion is the name of a category. As he puts it:

We can best interpret Aristotle's analogy between κίνησις and οὐσία [in IX.6] if we recognize that κίνησις, like οὐσία, is the name of a category: although it is not on the canonical list of categories in the *Categories*, Aristotle clearly refers to a category of κίνησις in *Metaphysics* 1029b22–25, 1054a4–6, 1069a21–22, and 1071a1–2: this is what is elsewhere divided into the categories of ποιεῖν and πάσχειν. (Menn, 1994, p. 107)

In his commentary on the *Metaphysics*, Aquinas likewise argues for the identity of *kinēsis* to doing and suffering: “For there is some subject of each of them, namely, of quality, quantity, when, where, and also of motion, in which are included both action and being acted upon” (Aquinas, 1995a). Elsewhere he writes, “For it is clear that both action and passion are motion; for each is the same as motion” (Aquinas, 1995b). Mention has already been made of Brentano, who maintains similarly that motion is “factually identical” to the categories of doing and suffering (Brentano, 1975, p. 87). Now, the fact (i) that there are a number of passages that count *kinēsis* as one of the categories, (ii) that there are others that count *kinein* and *kineisthai*, and (iii) that in none of these passages, *kinēsis*, *kinein*, or *kineisthai* coexist with the categories of doing and suffering lend support to the line of commentary according to which *kinēsis* is used as a joint name for these two categories. It is important to note, moreover, that this interpretation is consistent with Aristotle's own remark that there is no motion of the *poioun* (doer) or the *paschon* (sufferer) because there is no motion of motion. As he puts it:

If the categories are classified as substance, quality, place, *poiein* or *paschein*, relation, quantity, there must be three kinds of movement—of quality, of quantity, of place. There is no movement in respect...of *poioun* and *paschon*, nor of mover and moved, because there is no movement of movement nor generation of generation, nor, in general, change of change.<sup>10</sup> (*Met.* XI.12, 1068a8–16)

In what follows, I will try to show that the question concerning the *locus* of motion in Aristotle's categories is important for understanding the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX. More precisely, I will argue that the *dynamis* and *energeia* in respect of motion can also be understood as the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering—or, in Aristotle's own words, *dynamis tou poiein kai paschein* (IX.1, 1046a19–20). First, though, I would like to interject by providing a brief exposition of the terminology traditionally adopted in discussions concerning Aristotle's concepts of *dynamis*, *energeia*, and *entelecheia*.<sup>11</sup>

### 3 | THE TRADITIONAL TERMINOLOGY

When Aristotle provides his own definition of the soul at the beginning of *De Anima* II.1, he draws a distinction between what appear to be different kinds of *entelecheia*: namely, *entelecheia* as the mere possession of knowledge and *entelecheia* as the exercise of knowledge (*De Anima* II.1, 412a10–11). Later in the text, Aristotle employs this distinction when providing his definition of the soul:

Now there are two kinds of *entelecheia* corresponding to knowledge and to the act of contemplating [i.e., the exercise of knowledge]. It is obvious that the soul is an *entelecheia* like knowledge; for both

sleeping and waking presuppose the existence of soul, and of these waking corresponds to the act of contemplating, sleeping to knowledge possessed but not employed...That is why the soul is an *entelecheia* of the first kind of a natural body having life potentially in it. (*De Anima* II.1, 412a22–28)

The closing sentence of this passage features the phrase *entelecheia hē prōtē*, the likes of which are traditionally referred to as “first actuality.” For example, Aquinas writes that “in Book II of *The Soul* [Aristotle] says that a soul is the *first actuality* of a natural organic body having life potentially” (Aquinas, 1995a). Elsewhere, Aquinas elaborates that “the body, complete with its soul, is potentially animate in the sense that, though it has its first actuality, it may lack the second” (Aquinas, 1994).

Those who adopt this terminology say, for example, that knowledge is the first actuality and the act of contemplating is the second or that the (sensitive) soul is the first actuality and perceiving is the second. The idea here is that first actuality is itself a potentiality for a further actuality, as a result of which first actuality may also be called second potentiality.<sup>12</sup> For example, knowledge is an actuality, but it is at the same time a potentiality for the *exercise* of knowledge, the latter of which must be understood as second actuality. The person who has mastered the French language has the first actuality but does not necessarily have the second actuality, that is, unless she is uttering French sentences right now. Similarly, virtues are the first actuality, the lifelong exercise of which is happiness. Therefore, without going into the details of Aristotle's ethical theory (the question of external goods and so on), we may say that virtue is the first actuality and happiness is the second.

In other words, what is at issue is not a simple twofold division between potentiality and actuality but rather a threefold distinction between (i) first potentiality, (ii) first actuality or second potentiality, and (iii) second actuality. I think that this way of understanding the text is correct, yet there is a sense in which confining ourselves to this terminology alone may result in turning a blind eye to the *categorical foundations* of the *kata kinēsin-epi pleon* distinction in IX.1 and the analogy in IX.6. One of the objectives of my interpretation, therefore, is to complement the traditional terminology, and this I try to do by emphasizing the role of the categories in the composition of *Metaphysics* IX.<sup>13</sup>

## 4 | CAPACITY AND ACTIVITY

Mention has been made that Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* IX with the fourfold distinction between (i) *dynamis* in respect of motion (*dynamis kata kinēsin*), (ii) *energeia* in respect of motion (*energeia kata kinēsin*), (iii) *dynamis* that extends further (*dynamis epi pleon*), and (iv) *energeia* that extends further (*energeia epi pleon*). Aristotle defines the first of these as “the principle of change in another thing or in the thing itself as other” (IX.1, 1046a11).<sup>14</sup> While there are other senses of *dynamis kata kinēsin*, Aristotle states that it is the sense just mentioned that serves as the focal meaning. One of the other senses that depend on the focal meaning is the corresponding *dynamis* of the patient. The *dynamis* to move something else (or as something else) or be moved by something else (or as something else) is sometimes called a “power,”<sup>15</sup> in which case Aristotle's discussion at the beginning of *Metaphysics* IX concerns agent and passive powers.<sup>16</sup>

In *Metaphysics* IX, Aristotle's first examples of agent and passive powers are the *dynamis* for being burned and being crushed, which are passive powers, and the *dynamis* for heating and building, which are agent powers. Aristotle refers to these eventually as *dynamis tou poiēsai ē tou pathein* (1046a16–17), *dynamis tou poiein kai paschein* (1046a19–20), and *hē tou poiēsai ē pathein dynamis* (1046b25–26), that is, the *dynamis* of doing and suffering.<sup>17</sup> It is worth mentioning here that in the *Categories*, the examples Aristotle provides for the category of *poiein* are cutting and burning, and likewise the examples he gives for the category of *paschein* are being cut and being burned (*Categories* 4, 2a4). In *Metaphysics* IX, therefore, when Aristotle mentions the burnable (*kauston*) as something that has a passive capacity (IX.1, 1046a25), he is exploiting the familiar examples of burning (*kaiein*) and being burnt (*kaiesthai*).

A point that needs to be stressed here is that there are four categories (substance, quality, quantity, and place) that are closely related to the four motions: (i) generation and corruption, (ii) alteration, (iii) growth and diminution, and (iv) locomotion (*Physics* III.1, 201a11–15).<sup>18</sup> As Aristotle puts it in the *Physics*, “It is always with respect to (*kata*) substance or to quantity or to quality or to place that what changes changes” (*Physics* III.1, 200b33–34). Note that the categories just mentioned are those *in respect of which* the change occurs, and that they are therefore the categories where the *effect* of the motion is observed—which effect is produced by the joint activity of agent and passive powers. Let me try to demonstrate this with a couple of examples.

As has just been mentioned, cutting and being cut are the examples Aristotle gives in the *Categories* for *poiein* and *paschein*. Assume, for example, that I am cutting some paper (doing) and that the paper is being cut (suffering). As a result of this doing and suffering, the paper will eventually end up acquiring a new size and therefore a new quantity. In other words, after this process has been completed, the paper will have acquired a new form in the category of quantity. This kind of motion would be referred to by Aristotle as diminution (*phthisis*). Likewise, assume that I am painting my wall (doing) and that it is being painted by me (suffering). As a result of the joint activity of the capacities of the agent and the patient, the wall will end up acquiring a new color and therefore a new quality. This kind of motion would be referred to by Aristotle as alteration (*alloiōsis*). Many similar examples can be given, and what they show is that when we are dealing with motions such as building, teaching, cutting, painting, and so on, the doing and suffering take place with respect to (*kata*) the categories of substance, quality, quantity, or place, in which categories, moreover, the doing and suffering produce a lasting effect. But the fact that these motions take place with respect to the categories of substance, quality, quantity, or place should give us no reason to confuse motion with the categories with respect to which it takes place. It is worth noting in this context that at the end of his discussion of motion in *Physics* III.1–3, Aristotle describes motion as “the *entelecheia* of what can act and what can be acted on, as such” (*Physics* III.3, 202b26–27). The *entelecheia* of what can act as such is an action (doing), just as the *entelecheia* of what can be acted on as such is a passion (suffering), and it is important that we distinguish this doing and suffering from the four categories with respect to which they take place.

Let us now turn to perception. Perception is an example that Aristotle uses in two chapters (IX.3 and IX.5), both of which lie within the scope of text that by Aristotle's own admission treats *dynamis* in respect of motion. Why is perception treated in this part of *Metaphysics* IX? I argue in what follows that this is because perception, too, must be understood as the joint activity of two correlated capacities: the *dynamis* of the agent (the sensible object) and that of the patient (the sensing subject). If this is right, it would only be natural for Aristotle to treat perception analogously to the way in which he treats other agent and passive powers, such as cutting and being cut.

In the *Physics*, Aristotle writes that perception is a motion wherein the sense is *affected* in some respect (VII.2, 244b11–12). In the *De Anima* (II.12, 424a17–19), he explains perception as the *reception* of the sensible forms without the matter (*to dektikon tōn aisthētōn eidōn aneu tēs hylēs*). It is precisely this “receiving” that Aristotle characterizes as a suffering when, in *DA* II.7–11, he provides an account of how each of the five senses relate to their particular objects. Near the end of this account (II.11, 424a1), Aristotle states in no uncertain terms that perception is a kind of suffering (*to gar aisthanesthai paschein ti estin*). He adds in the next chapter that plants cannot perceive precisely because they are unable to partake in *this* kind of suffering, namely, without the matter; plants are only capable of, as Aristotle puts it, *paschein meta tēs hylēs* (II.12, 424b2).

The characterization of perception as a kind of suffering is prevalent in commentaries on Aristotle's philosophy of mind. In his commentary on the *De Anima* (Aquinas, 1994), Aquinas maintains that perception is a kind of undergoing (*sentire est pati quoddam*). In the same way, Averroes states in his long commentary on the *De Anima* that “sensation is one of the passive powers” and even more unambiguously that “affection is the genus of sensation” (Averroes, 2009, p. 162). Likewise, Brentano writes, “We sense by being moved by the sensed object, hence by being affected” (Brentano, 1977, p. 54). Lennox points out in a similar fashion that “perception is a *passive* capacity, a *being affected* by an object of perception” (Lennox, 2001, p. 183; emphasis in the original). This view is held also by Kosman, according to whom the “perceptual capacities, and the faculties of reason and thought as well, are

potentialities of the sensitive and intelligent subject to be *affected* in certain ways, to be acted upon by the sensible and intelligible forms of objects in the world” (Kosman, 2014, p. 66; emphasis in the original).

Perception is characterized specifically as an affection because it is what we do; that is to say, we (the perceiving subjects) receive the sensible forms of the objects. In the terminology of the *De Anima* (I.1, 402b15–16), the object (*to anti-keimenon*) of perception is that which is sensible (*to aisthēton*). Without going into the details of Aristotle's account of perception—for example, the role of the medium, the difference between the primary sense organ and the peripheral sense organs, the literalist vs. the spiritualist readings of Aristotle—the basic picture is that it is the sensible object that serves as the agent, which therefore has a capacity to act, just as the perceiving subject has a corresponding capacity to suffer.

In sum, once we raise the question of where motion fits in Aristotle's categories and answer that the *locus* of motion in the system of categories are the categories of doing and suffering, it becomes possible to understand why Aristotle's treatment of *dynamis* in respect of motion involves instances of *dynamis tou poiein* (e.g., building) and *dynamis tou paschein* (e.g., perceiving). But there is another issue that needs to be discussed in this context: namely, there is a sense in which each suffering (perceiving, being cut, etc.) coincides with a doing. If the wall is being painted, somebody or something is painting it. If the bricks and boards are being arranged into a house, somebody or something is arranging them so. In fact, to take Aristotle's own example in the *Physics*, the teaching performed by the teacher or the learning experienced by the student can be thought of as two different explanations of the same process from opposite poles. As Aristotle puts it:

Hence there is a single actuality of both [i.e., of that which can move and that which can be moved] alike, just as one to two and two to one are the same interval, and the steep ascent and the steep descent are one—for these are one and the same, although their definitions are not one.... This view has a dialectical difficulty. Perhaps it is necessary that there should be [a separate] actuality of the agent and of the patient. The one is agency and the other patency; and the outcome and end of the one is an action, that of the other a passion.... [But] it is not absurd that the actualization of one thing should be in another. Teaching is the activity of a person who can teach, yet the operation is performed in something.... There is nothing to prevent two things [e.g., the capacity to teach and the capacity to be taught] having one and the same actualization .... (*Physics* III.3, 202a18–202b9)

In his commentary on the *Physics*, Aquinas writes that “it is clear that action and passion are not two motions but one and the same motion” (Aquinas, 1995b), despite the fact that the two have different definitions. Ford claims likewise that “action and passion are two aspects of a single material reality, a transaction between the agent and patient” (Ford, 2014, p. 15). Gill makes a similar point: “Action and passion are one in the way that the road from Athens to Thebes and the road from Thebes to Athens are one” (Gill, 1989, p. 205).

The idea here is that to each *dynamis* of suffering corresponds a *dynamis* of doing, and even though the former *dynamis* is distinct from the latter, their *energeia* is one and the same.<sup>19</sup> The ability to teach is not identical to the ability to be taught; what is identical, rather, is the *energeia* of these agent and passive powers. Similarly, the *dynamis* to perceive and the *dynamis* to be perceived are distinct, but their *energeia* is one and the same. In a word, *dynamis* in respect of motion can also be understood as the *dynamis* of doing and suffering, in which case *energeia* in respect of motion can be understood as the exercise of *this* kind of *dynamis*. In what follows, I will call *dynamis* in respect of motion “capacity” and *energeia* in respect of motion “activity.” More precisely, I will call *dynamis* of doing or suffering “capacity” and *energeia* of doing or suffering “activity.”<sup>20</sup> In the next section, I will argue that capacity and activity serve as two of the analogues in the analogy in IX.6.

## 5 | THE ANALOGY IN METAPHYSICS IX.6

Aristotle begins *Metaphysics* IX with an analysis of the kinetic versions of *dynamis* and *energeia* (i.e., capacity and activity), and these, as we shall see, serve as two of the analogues in the analogy that Aristotle introduces



in IX.6. In other words, capacity and activity serve as the A and B in the analogy according to which what A is to B is what C is to D. Note also, however, that Aristotle begins with agent and passive capacities because it is this kind of *dynamis* that he inherits from Plato. What is at issue here are on the one hand the capacity to do and on the other hand the capacity to suffer, which correspond, as the Stranger in the *Sophist* puts it, to the *dynamis eis to poiein* and the *dynamis eis to pathein* (247d–e). Similarly, in the *Theaetetus* (156a), Plato explains that there are two kinds of motion (*tēs de kinēseōs dyo eidē*), the one having the capacity to do, the other to suffer (*dynamis de to men poiein echon, to de paschein*). Hence, there is enough common ground between Plato and Aristotle on this issue that one can see why Aristotle would begin his discussion of *dynamis* with the sense of the term that he inherits from his teacher.<sup>21</sup>

I propose that we understand the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX in the following way. Namely, Aristotle employs our understanding of agent and passive capacities, concepts that can already be found in Plato's philosophy, as a stepping stone toward an understanding of the *dynamis* that extends further. Of course, to each kind of *dynamis* corresponds a different kind of *energeia*. Therefore, we have, on the one hand, agent and passive capacities and their joint exercise and, on the other hand, the *dynamis* that extends further and its corresponding *energeia*. Aristotle begins IX.6 with the following words:

Since we have treated of the kind of *dynamis* which is related to *kinēsis*, let us discuss *energeia*, what and what sort of thing it is. In the course of our analysis it will also become clear, with regard to the *dynaton*, that we not only ascribe *dynaton* to that whose nature it is to move (*kinein*) something else or be moved (*kineisthai*) by something else, either without qualification or in some particular way, *but also use the word in another sense*, in the pursuit of which we have discussed these previous senses. (IX.6, 1048a25–30)

It has been argued throughout this paper that the *locus* of motion in the system of categories are the categories of doing and suffering, which would explain why Aristotle refers to *dynamis* in respect of motion subsequently as *dynameis tou poiēsai ē tou pathein* (1046a16–17), *dynamis tou poiein kai paschein* (1046a19–20), and *hē tou poiēsai ē pathein dynamis* (1046b25–26). But the passage under discussion says more: we are told that the *dynamis* of doing and suffering is not the only *dynamis*; in fact, it is not the kind of *dynamis* that is the most useful for our purposes. What is more important for our purposes is the *dynamis* that extends further, but Aristotle does not provide a definition for this particular *dynamis* or for its corresponding *energeia*; instead, he explicitly asks us not to demand a definition of everything but be content to grasp the analogy. As he puts it:

[W]e must not seek a definition of everything but be content to grasp the analogy,—that as (i) that which is building is to that which is capable of building, so is (ii) the waking to the sleeping, and (iii) that which is seeing to that which has its eyes shut but has sight, and (iv) that which is shaped out of the matter to the matter, and (v) that which has been wrought to the unwrought. (IX.6, 1048a36–1048b4)

How should we parse out this analogy? In the light of our previous discussion, (i), (ii), and (iii) must belong together as instances of the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering. In *Metaphysics* V.12, the building art (*hē oikodomikē dynamis*) is characterized as a principle of motion (*archē kinēseōs*) in another (1019a15–16), so it is an agent capacity. More precisely, the capacity to build is a capacity to make (*dynamis tou poiein*), and it belongs to builder, just as the capacity to be built belongs to the material from which the house is made. It has already been argued, moreover, that the capacity to see—and likewise the capacity to hear, smell, taste, and touch—must be understood as a passive capacity (*dynamis tou paschein*) and that the agent capacity in this case belongs to the visible (or, more generally, the sensible) object. That leaves us with (ii). At the beginning of the *De Somno*, Aristotle writes that “waking and sleep appertain to the same part of an animal, inasmuch as they are opposites, and sleep is evidently a privation of waking”



(453b25–26) and adds that waking “consists in nothing else than the exercise of sense-perception” (454a4–5). A few passages later, Aristotle says that “sleep is, in a certain way, or, as it were, a motionlessness bond, imposed on sense-perception, while its loosening or remission constitutes the being awake” (454b25–27). In other words, waking must be understood as a releasement (*lysis*) into activity of the capacity for perception, which means that the relation between sleep and waking corresponds to the relation between the capacity for perception, which remains unenacted as long as the animal remains asleep, and the exercise of this capacity.

In sum, my point is that the *dynamis* to build or to perceive are instances of what is referred to in IX.1 as *dynamis tou poiein kai paschein* (IX.1, 1046a19–20), which in turn corresponds to the agent and passive capacities that we find in Plato's dialogues the *Theaetetus* (156a) and the *Sophist* (247d–e). If this is right, (i)–(iii) together comprise one side of the analogy, in which case, the other side of the analogy must consist of (iv)–(v). For similar reasons, Menn (1994, p. 106ff.) also divides the analogy into (i)–(iii) and (iv)–(v). Likewise, Makin argues that what is at issue here are “three pairs of cases framed in terms of the change-capacity relation which was the focus of  $\Theta 1-5$ ” and “two pairs...which concern the substance-matter relation” and adds that (i)–(iii) “illustrate the change-capacity relation,” while (iv)–(v) illustrate “the substance-matter relation” (Makin, 2006, p. 137). Beere, who offers a detailed analysis of the analogy (Beere, 2009, pp. 169–219), also understands the passage under discussion to draw a distinction between what he calls “the activity-like cases of *energeia* and the actuality-like cases of *energeia*” (Beere, 2009, p. 200). Elsewhere, he writes that this analogy is meant “to unify cases of doing (both changes and nonchange activities) and cases that are static” (Beere, 2018, p. 878).

I agree with much of what is said here, but I believe that more emphasis needs be placed on the *categorical basis* of the division of the analogy into (i)–(iii) and (iv)–(v). Again, (i)–(iii) are instances of the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering, whereas (iv)–(v) are instances of the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance. Some things, Aristotle concludes, “are as *kinēsis* to *dynamis*, and the others as substance to some sort of matter” (IX.6, 1048b8–9). Thus, Aristotle's remarks involve a contrast between the *dynamis* and *energeia* of motion and the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance.<sup>22</sup> As we shall see, another virtue of this interpretation is that it is consistent with passages in IX.3 and XII.4–5 where Aristotle talks about how the concepts of *dynamis* and *energeia* apply analogously in different categories.

## 6 | AN INTERPRETATION OF EPI PLEON

In the earlier sections of the paper, I tried to advance an interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX that places emphasis on the role of the categories. Additional support for this interpretation comes from a passage in IX.3:

Therefore it is possible that a thing may be capable of being and not be, and capable of not being and yet be, and similarly with the other kinds of predicate (*epi tōn allōn katēgoriōn*); it may be capable of walking and yet not walk, or capable of not walking and yet walk. (1047a20–24)

In this passage, Aristotle begins with the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance—“a thing may be capable of being and not be”—but extends it to the other categories, and the example he gives is walking, which belongs to the category of doing.<sup>23</sup> Here, the phrase *epi tōn allōn katēgoriōn* (in the case of *other* categories) appears to be parallel to the *epi pleon* mentioned in IX.1, in which case “extending further” can be understood to have a categorical basis. The analogy in IX.6 begins with the categories of doing and suffering (i.e., the category of motion), so the other category is substance. The IX.3 passage, in contrast, begins with substance, so the other category is doing. What is important to realize is that similar examples are given in the aforementioned passages in IX.3 and IX.6. In the former, Aristotle begins with substance, so the explicitly mentioned *allai katēgoriai* include categories such as doing (e.g., walking); in the latter, Aristotle begins with the categories of doing and suffering and then proceeds to substance. If this is right,

in IX.6, Aristotle proceeds from the *dynamis* and *energeia* of motion to the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance, whereas in IX.3, he proceeds from the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance to the *dynamis* and *energeia* of motion.

Another advantage of this interpretation is that it agrees with various passages in *Metaphysics* XII.4–5, which also discuss, as Makin puts it, how *dynamis* and *energeia* “apply analogously in the different categories” (Makin, 2006, p. 129; emphasis in the original). In one of these passages Aristotle writes the following:

The causes and the principles of different things are in a sense different, but in a sense, if one speaks universally and *analogically*, they are the same for all. For we might raise the question whether the principles and elements are different or the same for substances and for relatives, and similarly in the case of each of the categories. (XII.4, 1070a31–35)

In this passage, Aristotle mentions neither *dynamis* nor *energeia*, but in the next chapter, he adds that “analogically identical things are principles, that is, *energeia* and *dynamis*” (XII.5, 1071a4–5). I agree with Makin that, taken together, these passages suggest that *dynamis* and *energeia* apply analogously in different categories. What can we conclude from these? If we understand the distinction between the kinetic and nonkinetic variants of *dynamis* and *energeia* in IX.1 in categorial terms, and if we likewise grant that the analogy in IX.6 has a categorial basis, our interpretation would be in line with passages in IX.3 and XII.4–5, in which passages, Aristotle explicitly mentions the categories when talking about the (analogical) extension of *dynamis* and *energeia*.<sup>24</sup>

This leaves us with one more point to be discussed, which is the distinction that Aristotle draws in *Metaphysics* IX.6 and *Nicomachean Ethics* X.4 between end-inclusive and end-exclusive activities. My goal will be to show that this distinction is not pertinent to the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX.

## 7 | THE ENERGEIA-KINĒSIS DISTINCTION

In this last section, I will critically examine the claim that Aristotle's division of activities into those that are end-inclusive and those that are end-exclusive pertains directly to the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX. I will have to say three things about this position. First, I will argue that it is incompatible with the categorial interpretation of the analogy in IX.6, an interpretation for which we have strong evidence. Next, I will point out that because the manuscript evidence for the IX.6 passage containing the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction is weak, it would be wrong to rely too much on this passage in interpreting *Metaphysics* IX. Finally, I will try to draw insights from Aristotle's discussion of perception and argue that perception is an end-inclusive activity that would not have been treated in IX.1–5 if these chapters were confined to a discussion of end-exclusive activities.

Let us first try to understand what is meant by the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, in a passage where he tries to determine the ontological status of pleasure, Aristotle writes the following:

For every motion (e.g., that of building) takes time and is for the sake of an end, and is complete when it has made what it aims at. It is complete, therefore, only in the whole time or at the final moment. In their parts and during the time they occupy, all motions are incomplete...So, too, in the case walking and all other motions. (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.4, 1174a29)

These remarks suggest that as long as somebody is walking, the *telos* has not been reached yet, which is another way of saying that each and every part of walking is necessarily *atelēs*.<sup>25</sup> What is important about these activities is that they have their ends outside themselves. For example, being in Athens is the end of walking toward Athens, but the two cannot co-exist: I cannot be walking toward Athens if I am already in it, just as it cannot be the case that I am in Athens as long as I am walking toward the city. The goal of walking toward Athens, in fact, is to *no longer be walking towards Athens*, which is why all such activities have what Kosman calls a “self-destructive character”

(Kosman, 1969, p. 58). In *Metaphysics* IX.6, Aristotle distinguishes these activities from activities that are at each moment complete:

E.g. at the same time we are seeing and have seen, are understanding and have understood, are thinking and have thought: but it is not true that at the same time we are learning and have learnt, or are being cured and have been cured...Of these, then, we must call the one set *kinēseis*, and the other *energeiai*. (1048b23–28)

Commenting on the relation of *energeia* to *kinēsis*, Ross draws attention to terminological inconsistencies in Aristotle; according to Ross, Aristotle uses the same name for the genus (characterized alternatively as *kinēsis* or *energeia*) and the two species of the genus.<sup>26</sup> Menn argues, rather, that *energeia* is the genus, while complete and incomplete *energeia* are its two species: “κίνησις is a subclass of ἐνέργεια...and so is not properly contradistinguished from ἐνέργεια...Aristotle is not here denying (what elsewhere he plainly affirms) that κινήσεις are ἐνέργειαι, any more than I deny that men are animals when I say ‘this kind of thing I call an animal, that a man’” (Menn, 1994, p. 106, n. 43).<sup>27</sup> In Menn's example, animal is the genus, while rational and irrational animal are its species, and in the above passage, the two species of the genus *energeia* are complete and incomplete *energeia*. Sometimes, we distinguish man from animal, in which case, we are not denying that man is, properly speaking, a distinct kind of animal; what we mean to say is that man is different from other animals, namely, from those that are irrational. Despite their differences, Ross, Menn, and Beere share the view that what is at issue here are (i) a genus and (ii) different species of the genus. Despite terminological inconsistencies in Aristotle, then, these commentators agree that there is a certain genus, whose species can be distinguished from one another by some differentia.

The basic idea behind the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction is that some activities have their ends within (e.g., seeing, understanding, thinking, living well, being happy), while others do not (e.g., making thin, learning, being cured, walking, building). And there is a way to tell the one kind of activities from the other. The question Aristotle wants us to consider is whether the present tense of these verbs implies the perfect tense. For example, does somebody who is seeing imply a person who has seen? Does somebody who is learning imply a person who has learned? In the former case, yes, in the latter, no.

On one common interpretation of the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction, the present does not imply the perfect in cases where what is at issue is an activity the completion of which requires time.<sup>28</sup> As Halper puts it, end-inclusive activities “are timeless in the sense that their definitions need not include time” (Halper, 1989, p. 209). In other words, unlike walking from Thebes to Athens, which takes time to complete (and when the journey is complete, the walking will have ceased), seeing red is at each moment complete. According to Kosman, it is because an end-inclusive activity “does not need to await any further development to perfect or complete its being that it is complete and perfect at each and every present moment of its duration” (Kosman, 2013). If I am seeing red, this entails, in Aristotle's view, that I *have seen* red; that is, nobody can claim that I have not seen red if I am seeing it right now. In other words, seeing red has at each moment its *telos* within; it is at each moment *enteleēs*.

There have been commentators who maintain, for various reasons, that the division of activities into those that are end-inclusive and those that are end-exclusive pertains directly to the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX.<sup>29</sup> Other commentators disagree with this view, and I believe they are right. Let us remember Aristotle's analogy in IX.6:

[A]s (i) that which is building is to that which is capable of building, so is (ii) the waking to the sleeping, and (iii) that which is seeing to that which has its eyes shut but has sight, and (iv) that which is shaped out of the matter to the matter, and (v) that which has been wrought to the unwrought. (IX.6, 1048a37–1048b4)

If this analogy were structured in terms of the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction, we should not expect (i)–(iii) to belong together, for (i) exemplifies an end-exclusive activity (because to build does not entail to have built), whereas (ii) and (iii)—or at least (iii), which is unambiguous—exemplify end-inclusive activities (because to perceive entails to have perceived). This would

explain why commentators have maintained that (i)–(iii) do not belong together (Halper, 1989, p. 209) or that (i)–(iii) do not initially seem to belong together (Gill, 1989, p. 215).<sup>30</sup> This way of understanding the text, according to which the unity of (i)–(iii) is either denied or believed to be a complex issue, is therefore incompatible with the categorial interpretation of the analogy, for on this interpretation there are no grounds to doubt the unity of (i)–(iii) because they all concern the same categories, namely, the categories of doing and suffering. In Section 5 of the paper, I explained that (i)–(iii) must belong together because building, waking, and seeing all fall under the categories of doing and suffering, the *dynamis* and *energeia* of which Aristotle means to compare with the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance.

The categorial interpretation of the analogy that I advanced in this paper is in line with the view held not only by commentators according to whom the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction does not belong in the text of IX.6 (more on this shortly) but also by commentators according to whom the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction is a *finer* distinction that is not directly pertinent to the analogy. According to Makin, for example, what is at issue in (i)–(iii) is an “undifferentiated notion of change” (Makin, 2006, p. 134). Makin adds in the next lines that Aristotle’s “conclusions [in IX.1–5] concerning capacities and their exercise will not be sensitive to the more fine-grained distinction” between end-inclusive and end-exclusive activities (Makin, 2006, p. 135), and he concludes eventually that “the 1048b18–35 distinction between change and actuality is not crucial to *Met. Θ*” (Makin, 2006, p. 154). For similar reasons, Witt argues that if “one makes the distinction between motions and activities crucial [here]...then it is very difficult to interpret [Aristotle’s] examples, which include both motions like building and activities like seeing” (Witt, 2003, p. 134, n. 20). In the same vein, Menn maintains that the “distinction between those activities that may be called *κινήσεις* and those activities that should only be called *ἐνέργειαι* is a relatively fine point” (Menn, 1994, p. 106), and Beere points out likewise that he “does not accept [the] interpretation” that “the distinction between change and *energeia* is important in Theta 6” (Beere, 2009, p. 228). In sum, I agree with the conclusions reached by these commentators (who appeal to Aristotle’s examples as evidence that the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction is a finer distinction that is not directly pertinent to the analogy in IX.6) because, once again, the interpretation of the analogy that has been advanced in this paper is one that distinguishes sharply between (i)–(iii) and (iv)–(v), which distinction has a *categorial* basis.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind that the manuscript evidence for the IX.6 passage containing the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction is weak.<sup>31</sup> This is not to suggest that Aristotle never draws such a distinction; mention has been made that Aristotle draws a similar distinction in *Nicomachean Ethics* X.4. Note, however, that one may believe that the distinction between end-inclusive and end-exclusive activities is an Aristotelian distinction and still question its inclusion in IX.6. For example, Halper, according to whom the distinction is significant for the composition of *Metaphysics* IX, concedes nevertheless that the passage in question is one that is “absent from the best manuscripts” (Halper, 1989, p. 209). Likewise, Kosman concedes the “high probability that the passage is an interloper” but adds that this “raises little difficulty” for his position (Kosman, 2013). Granted, even if the passage has been inserted by an editor, this would not show that the distinction is not an Aristotelian distinction or even that it is an insignificant distinction, but such a concession would take away from the original appeal of attempts to treat the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction as the key to understanding the structure of *Metaphysics* IX. In sum, the manuscript status of the passage containing the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction cannot be taken as conclusive evidence for a particular way of reading the text, but it should at least caution us against relying too much on this passage in our interpretations of *Metaphysics* IX.

Finally, and I think most importantly, those who hold the view that Aristotle’s division of activities into those that are end-inclusive and those that are end-exclusive is significant for the composition of *Metaphysics* IX will have a difficult time explaining why perception, which is an end-inclusive activity that happens to be one of the analogues in the analogy, is mentioned twice in IX.1–5. In IX.3, for example, whether the capacity for perception exists when it is not being enacted and likewise whether sensible qualities exist when they are not being perceived are some of the central questions in Aristotle’s confrontation with the Megarian philosophers. Perception is also mentioned at the very beginning of IX.5, which is generally believed to serve as a summary of the earlier chapters. The point that I wish to make here is the following: insofar as IX.1–5 does not include a discussion of the *epi pleon* variant of *dynamis*, the capacity to perceive must be kinetic. But if the kinetic variant of *dynamis* were to be interpreted as the *dynamis*

pertaining to end-exclusive activities, which some believe is the correct interpretation, perception too would have to count as an end-exclusive activity. Quite the contrary, however, it is clear that Aristotle considers perception to be an end-inclusive activity (*De Sensu* 6, 446b2–3; *Metaphysics* IX.6, 1048b23; IX.6, 1048b33–34). There is a problem here, then, and the problem has to do with the interpretation of the kinetic version of *dynamis* as the *dynamis* pertaining to end-exclusive activities. The categorial interpretation of *dynamis kata kinēsin* is not plagued by this problem because it would not be surprising for Aristotle to include a discussion of perception here if the kind of *dynamis* treated in IX.1–5 is the *dynamis* of doing and suffering and if perception is a suffering, as I have argued is the case.

On a final note, most commentators agree that there are terminological inconsistencies on the part of Aristotle, and I think that this is because Aristotle uses two terms to refer to three concepts. To distinguish clearly between these concepts, I call the genus “activity” (a concept which I described as the joint exercise of correlative agent and passive capacities), while I call its species “end-inclusive activity” and “end-exclusive activity.” Among these, the term *energeia* refers sometimes to activity in general and sometimes to end-inclusive activity.<sup>32</sup> The term *kinēsis* refers to end-exclusive activity, but if the arguments in this paper have been successful, it also refers to activity in general, which is in line with the terminology adopted by Makin, who talks about an “undifferentiated notion of change” (Makin, 2006, p. 134) that includes building and seeing, and likewise with the terminology adopted by Witt, who divides motion into “incomplete and complete motions” (Witt, 2003, p. 50). If *kinēsis* were confined to end-exclusive activity, we would not be able to explain why *kinēsis* is sometimes listed as a category (because not everything belonging under this category is end-exclusive) and why the capacity for perception, which is an instance of end-inclusive activity, is treated among the kinetic variants of *dynamis*. I am therefore in complete agreement with Ross, who writes that “κίνησις and ἐνέργεια are species of something wider for which Aristotle has no name, and for which he uses now the name of one species, now that of the other” (Ross (1924, Vol. 2, p. 251).<sup>33</sup> What I would add to this is that the more specific difference between the two species of the genus (i.e., the difference between the end-inclusive and end-exclusive species) is not pertinent to the composition of *Metaphysics* IX.

To facilitate further discussion of these issues, let me restate the conclusions of this paper as clearly as possible: (i) the *locus* of motion in Aristotle's categories are the categories of doing and suffering, (ii) *dynamis* and *energeia* in respect of motion can also be understood as the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering, (iii) *Metaphysics* IX begins with a discussion of the *dynamis* and *energeia* of doing and suffering and proceeds to a discussion of the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance, and (iv) Aristotle's distinction between end-inclusive and end-exclusive activities does not pertain directly to the thematic progression of *Metaphysics* IX.

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> The clearest formulation of the fourfold division is in VI.2, 1026a33–1026b2, of the eightfold division in V.7, 1017a25–7. Note that while the latter is the most comprehensive list of the categories in the *Metaphysics*, the passages in *Categories* 4, 1b26–7 and *Topics* I.9, 103b22–4 also include *keisthai* and *echein*, in which case we end up with 10 categories instead of eight.

<sup>2</sup> For translations of Aristotle I follow Barnes (ed.), *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, sometimes with slight modifications.

<sup>3</sup> I owe this terminology (end-inclusive vs. end-exclusive) to Charles (2018), who in turn cites Alexander Mourelatos.

<sup>4</sup> Aristotle points out in *Metaphysics* IX.1, 1045b35–1046a1 that he will first treat the kind of *dynamis* that is less useful for our present purposes and in IX.6, 1048a25–26 that the foregoing discussion has treated *dynamis* in respect of motion. While these remarks give the impression that IX.1–5 is confined to a discussion of *dynamis* and that later chapters will focus on *energeia* (I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out), this way of understanding the composition of *Metaphysics* IX has more drawbacks than advantages, for it then becomes very difficult to explain the text of IX.3 and IX.7. In his commentary on *Metaphysics* IX.1–3, Heidegger states that in IX.3 “the theme is ἐνέργεια” (Heidegger, 1995, p. 148), and while this is not entirely clear, it would be very difficult to maintain that this chapter treats *energeia* only to

clarify the concept of *dynamis* because at the end of the chapter *dynamis* is not even a part of the discussion (IX.3, 1047a30–1047b2), which discussion rather examines the origins of the concept of *energeia* and, moreover, the relationship between *energeia* and *entelecheia*. Makin maintains likewise that the second part of the chapter comments on *energeia* (Makin, 2006, p. 60), which would not be surprising because in earlier passages in the chapter Aristotle has argued (against the Megarian philosophers) that *dynamis* in respect of motion and *energeia* in respect of motion are two separate concepts that should not be conflated. Furthermore, the discussion of *dynamis* cannot be confined to IX.1–5, for *dynamis* becomes the theme also in IX.7. As Beere puts it, “In Theta 7, Aristotle shifts the focus of his discussion from being-in-*energeia* to being-in-capacity” (Beere, 2009, p. 231), and Witt writes likewise that IX.7 is concerned with the “question about potentiality, which is how to determine when one thing is another potentially” (Witt, 2003, p. 133, n. 14). There are reasons to believe, therefore, that IX.1–5 includes a discussion of *energeia*, just as later chapters include a discussion of *dynamis*.

<sup>5</sup> Various formulations of the definition can be found in *Physics* III.1–3 and in *Metaphysics* XI.9.

<sup>6</sup> See especially *Physics* III.1, 201a11–15. If motion is from contrary to contrary, however, there can only be three motions (see fn. 14 below for further discussion).

<sup>7</sup> See also Kosman (2013, pp. 70–71).

<sup>8</sup> See *Categories* 4 for the examples Aristotle gives to each category.

<sup>9</sup> Note that the bifurcation of *kinēsis* into *kinein* (moving) and *kineisthai* (being moved) also occurs in *Metaphysics* IX.6, where Aristotle mentions *kinēsis* in 1048a25 and *kinein* and *kineisthai* in 1048a28–29.

<sup>10</sup> Commenting on this passage, Aquinas argues that there cannot be a motion of doing or suffering because doing and suffering are already motion (*agere et pati sunt motus*) and there cannot be a motion of motion (Aquinas, 1995a).

<sup>11</sup> The relation between the terms *energeia* and *entelecheia* is too large a topic to explore here, so the reader is referred to Menn's seminal paper “The Origins of Aristotle's Concept of ‘Ενέργεια’”, which I think gets much right. Menn's interpretation has been challenged by Blair (1995) and Graham (1995). See Olshewsky (1997, pp. 1–4) for an overview of different interpretations.

<sup>12</sup> As Edward Halper puts it, “The first actuality...is a potentiality that can be actualized further, such as knowledge that is not in use. A first actuality is potentially a second actuality, and is thus both potential and actual” (Halper, 1989, p. 164). Likewise, Kosman writes that “a first actuality is a potentiality toward a second actuality” (Kosman, 1969, p. 51). Cf. Ross (1936, p. 88).

<sup>13</sup> Commentators who adopt the traditional terminology agree minimally that Aristotle intends to distinguish between first potentiality, first actuality (or second potentiality), and second actuality. An interpretation of *Metaphysics* IX that emphasizes the role of the categories is not incompatible with this minimal agreement. See also fn. 20 below.

<sup>14</sup> For the most part Aristotle uses the terms change and motion interchangeably, but there is a well-known exception in *Physics* V.1, where Aristotle draws a distinction between the two terms, arguing that since motion (*kinēsis*) is from contrary to contrary, there are four changes (*metabolai*) but only three motions (225b8–9, see also *Metaphysics* XI.12, 1068a9–10), in which case neither generation nor corruption would count as an instance of motion. In most other passages, however, the terms *kinēsis* and *metabolē* and the phrases *archē kinēseōs* and *archē metabolēs* alternate without any sign of a distinction in meaning.

<sup>15</sup> See also Beere (2009, pp. 33–67) on his use of the term “power.” Cf. Halper (1989, pp. 286–287, n. 2) and Graham (1995, p. 558ff.).

<sup>16</sup> Witt writes that she prefers to “use the terminology agent and passive powers, instead of active and passive powers, in order to avoid confusing this distinction with the other important contrast Aristotle draws between inactive and active powers” (Witt, 2003, p. 132, n. 9). I adopt Witt's terminology because I share the same concerns.

<sup>17</sup> In two of these passages, Aristotle also talks about doing and suffering *well*, which are simply more specific kinds of doing and suffering.

<sup>18</sup> See also *Categories* 14, 15a13–14, *De Anima* I.3, 406a12–13, and *Metaphysics* XII.2, 1069b9–10. In the last passage, the connection between the four categories (substance, quality, quantity, place) and the four motions (generation/corruption, alteration, growth/diminution, locomotion) is made explicit.

<sup>19</sup> Here one may raise the following question: why are doing and suffering treated as two different categories if, in fact, they are simply two ways of explaining the same activity from different perspectives? While this question is too complex to discuss adequately here, an excellent discussion of the subject can be found in Brentano (1975, pp. 86–89).

<sup>20</sup> Note that the way that I use the term “activity” would correspond to the “second actuality” of the traditional terminology. My point is that the *locus* of this kind of *energeia* (i.e., the exercise of a capacity) are the categories of doing and suffering. In my view, the *energeia* of substance is *not* a second actuality, and I believe that it is a first actuality, but I also



believe that first actualities are not confined to the *energeia* of substance. These are difficult issues that cannot be treated in passing, however, so I will not discuss them further here.

- <sup>21</sup> See also Beere (2009, pp.3–29) and Menn (1994, p. 74).
- <sup>22</sup> Part of this interpretation—namely, that there are on the one hand the *dynamis* and *energeia* of motion and on the other hand the *dynamis* and *energeia* of substance—is already commonly held. However, few scholars have emphasized the role of the categories in their interpretations of the *kata kinēsin-epi pleon* distinction in IX.1 and of Aristotle's analogy in IX.6. Menn mentions their role (Menn, 1994, p. 95, n. 32 and pp. 105–107), but only in passing. Similarly, Averroes, in his “epitome” commentary on the *Metaphysics*, briefly mentions the categorial basis of Aristotle's analogy in IX.6, but he interprets the analogy in a different way (Averroes, 2010, p. 99).
- <sup>23</sup> In *Metaphysics* IX, Aristotle discusses the relation between the capacity for doing or suffering and the capacity for doing or suffering well (IX.1, 1046a17; IX.2, 1946b25). An analogue of this discussion can be found in *Metaphysics* V.12, where Aristotle talks about the difference between walking and walking well (1019a24–26) and adds in the next sentence that the same holds for *paschein*, from which we can gather that the capacity to walk is a *dynamis tou poiein*.
- <sup>24</sup> Note that there is an important extent to which my understanding of *Metaphysics* IX is not incompatible with the interpretation of the book advanced by Witt, who argues that Aristotle illustrates the relationship between *dynamis* and *energeia* “with two kinds of examples: the relationship between an inactive capacity and its active exercise, and the relationship between an incomplete substance and a complete (or perfected) substance” (Witt, 2003, p. 39). To acknowledge, as I do, that there is “one” concept of *dynamis* and “one” concept of *energeia* that apply analogically in different categories is to acknowledge what Witt would call the “ontological” sense of these terms, in which case Witt's interpretation of the text is not much different from mine, at least in this respect. Similarly, I would not disagree with Frede, according to whom the *dynamis* and *energeia* treated in IX.6–7 is not “a further, distinct kind” of *dynamis* (Frede, 1994, p. 180) or “a distinct, special kind” of *energeia* (Frede, 1994, p. 182) over and above those already treated in IX.1–5. The point that I have been trying to make is that there is an analogical extension of these concepts in different categories, in which case I am in no way denying that the analogues enjoy some kind of unity. I discuss this issue in a recent paper, where I address the question of what ties together the kinetic and non-kinetic variants of *dynamis* and *energeia* (Unlu, 2020, pp. 135–138).
- <sup>25</sup> According to Kosman, walking in the sense of strolling (*spazieren*) counts as an end-inclusive activity (Kosman, 1969, p. 58), but it should give us pause that this is not Aristotle's own example. For further discussion of this example, see Carter (2014, p. 476ff). Cf. Ackrill (1965, pp. 131–133).
- <sup>26</sup> See Ross (1924, Vol. 2, p. 251). Halper talks about similar terminological inconsistencies (Halper, 1989, p. 283, n. 206).
- <sup>27</sup> Beere holds a similar view (Beere, 2009, p. 229).
- <sup>28</sup> Aristotle maintains that every motion (*kinēsis*), as opposed to *energeia* proper, takes time (*Nicomachean Ethics* X.4, 1174a19).
- <sup>29</sup> For example, Halper introduces the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction with the following words: “Since Aristotle defines actuality through this analogy with motion, and since it and the potentiality for it differ from motion and the potentiality for motion, the analogy calls for a distinction between motion and actuality” (Halper, 1989, p. 209). See also Halper (1984, pp. 815–818); Kosman (1984); Gill (1989, pp. 214–218); and Kosman (2013, pp. 73–78).
- <sup>30</sup> Gill tries nevertheless to preserve the unity of (i)–(iii) by suggesting that building is not a motion (Gill, 1989, pp. 224–225). See also Kosman (2013, p. 264, n. 5) and the containing paragraph. My own view is that it is a forced interpretation to use the very distinction by which Aristotle distinguishes building from seeing to argue somehow that building and seeing belong together.
- <sup>31</sup> See Makin (2006, p. 150), Burnyeat (2008), and Beere (2009, pp. 226–227) for a detailed discussion of the manuscript evidence for the passage on the *energeia-kinēsis* distinction.
- <sup>32</sup> Kosman writes similarly that an activity is either “an activity proper or a motion” (Kosman, 2013, p. 71). On another note, it is important to keep in mind that the term *energeia* also refers to *energeia epi pleon*, which is, however, outside of the genus that we are interested in presently. Yet, it is precisely this fact—that is, that there is an *epi pleon* version of *energeia*—that explains why Aristotle treats *kinēsis* as the paradigmatic *energeia*. According to Kosman, “If motion is a degenerate kind of ἐνέργεια, it is not clear why Aristotle should have thought it an (even putative) paradigm of ἐνέργεια.” (Kosman, 1969, p. 59). I think that the interpretation advanced in this paper resolves this difficulty: there is both a kinetic and a non-kinetic version of *energeia*, and it is the former of these—that is, *energeia* in the sense of activity—that serves as the paradigm.
- <sup>33</sup> Note that unlike Kosman, who divides activity into activity proper and motion (Kosman, 2013, p. 71), Witt divides motion into “incomplete and complete motions” (Kosman, 2013, p. 50), but despite the different terminology, the basic idea is the same.

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## Essence and definition in Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*

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ARTICLE



## Essence and definition in Aristotle's *Parts of Animals*

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### ABSTRACT

In this paper, I argue that the *Parts of Animals* [PA] should be seen as continuing in the tradition of those earlier natural scientists who “investigated the material principle of things and that sort of cause” (PA I 1, 640b4–5), but with its own Aristotelian twist. First, Aristotle expands the scope of this inquiry to include animal parts (PA 646a13–b27) since these constitute the matter out of which animals are composed. Second, and more importantly, he reconceptualizes this matter as definitionally-dependent on, and teleologically-oriented towards, the form for whose sake it exists (PA 640b29–641a6, 645b15–20, 646b10–26). It follows from this that we cannot define that matter without also mentioning the form (PA 640b26–9, 645a30–b1). Thus, Aristotle recommends defining “the matter of the composite” (PA 640b24–9) as the most effective way of accomplishing the definitional aims of the PA; for this strategy alone yields a complete definition of the composite itself.

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### The search for definitions

It is widely recognized that Aristotle's theory of scientific inquiry includes among its primary aims the search for definitions of the natural kinds of a given domain. This is evident from Book II of the *Posterior Analytics* where Aristotle argues that scientific inquiry is organized around two pairs of questions:

[1] Is S P? Why is S P?

[2] Does S exist? What is S?

where S is a kind (e.g. human) and P one of its attributes (e.g. hands). In *APo.* II 2 we are told that the answer to the ‘What is S?’ question – which is a definition stating the essence of a kind – and the answer to the ‘Why is S P?’ question – which specifies the cause that explains why members of that kind have the attributes they do – are the same: “In all cases it is clear that

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what it is and why it is are the same. What is an eclipse? Privation of light from the moon by the screening of the earth. Why is there an eclipse? Or why is the moon eclipsed? Because the light leaves it when the earth screens it" (90a15–18).

Several things Aristotle says in the first book of the *Parts of Animals* leads us to expect that the science of living things also includes a search for definitions among its primary aims.<sup>1</sup> At *PA* 642a24–6, for example, Aristotle tells us that one of the shortcomings of earlier attempts at natural science was the lack of an adequate theory of essence and definition: "The reason those who have gone before us did not arrive at this way of doing things is that there was no essence (*to ti ên einai*) and no defining the substance (*horisasthai tên ousian*)". Further evidence of a concern with definitions can be found in *PA* I 2–3 where Aristotle discusses the method of division, which is elsewhere said to be a tool for "hunting down" the terms specified in a thing's essence (*APo.* II 13, 96a22–3). Assuming division plays the same role in the biological works, when Aristotle characterizes it at *PA* 644a10–11 as a method for "grasping particular animals" it is reasonable to assume that the sort of grasp he has in mind is one that comes from having a definition of them.<sup>2</sup>

While *PA* I suggests that Aristotle's biology will be concerned with definitions, some have questioned whether this concern is reflected in the rest of the treatise. As Gotthelf (*Teleology*, 155) notes: "But are there animal definitions in *PA*, and do they play such roles? It has often been claimed, and not without reason, that there are no definitions of animal kinds in *PA*, or anywhere in the biological treatises. That the theory of science calls for such definitions does not entail that they will be present in the scientific practice". The working hypothesis of this paper is that *PA* II–IV does attempt to generate definitions, just as *PA* I would lead us to expect. This is not to say that definition is the only, let alone dominant, concern of *PA* II–IV. The claim is simply that, whatever else Aristotle is attempting to do there, it includes a search for definitions and that this project is conducted in accordance with the recommendations from *PA* I.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In addition to the following see also *PA* 639a12–19, 639b13–640a6. There is now broad agreement among scholars that what Aristotle does in his biological works is not only compatible with the theory of science in the *Analytics* but is also (at least in part) guided by it. See Lennox, *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology* and Gotthelf, *Teleology*, Parts II and IV. While I will note some places where the *PA* treatment of definition seems to mirror the *Analytics*, my goal in what follows is to explore the *PA* account of definition in its own right.

<sup>2</sup>See also Balme, "Division", 70. The method of division outlined in *PA* I 2–3 is clearly meant to inform the broader method of inquiry discussed at various other points throughout Book I (e.g. *PA* 639a15–b6, 644a23–b14, 645b1–14) and put into practice in Books II–IV (e.g. *PA* III 6).

<sup>3</sup>This 'hypothesis' is meant as a starting assumption. But it is by no means uncontroversial. For example, one might agree that Aristotle thinks arriving at definitions is an important part of the science of living things but deny that it forms part of Aristotle's specific project in *PA* II–IV. On this alternative, *PA* II–IV presupposes definitions arrived at elsewhere, which then serve as the starting-points for the causal explanations of animal parts we get in *PA* II–IV (M. Leunissen, personal communication). I will not pursue this

As formulated, however, our working hypothesis is difficult to assess because it does not tell us anything about the theory of definition at work in *PA* I. Specifically, it does not say anything about what *PA* I takes to be the objects of definition or what a definition of those objects should look like. In what follows, I will flesh out three different versions of this hypothesis based on how each answers these questions.<sup>4</sup> According to the version I defend (Version 3), *PA* II–IV attempts to define the *matter* of composite animals in the tradition of the earlier natural scientists (e.g. Empedocles, Democritus). However, let me start by considering the first two versions both of which take Aristotle to be aiming at definitions of animal *forms*.

### Version 1: pure forms

According to the first version of our hypothesis the object of definition in biology should be the species *form*, which is constituted by soul-capacities alone (e.g. *DA* 412a11–b6, *PA* 640b29–641b10). It is tempting to adopt this version of our hypothesis when we read the *PA* through the lens of the *Metaphysics*. According to the central books of the *Metaphysics*, a definition is an account stating the essence of a thing (*Metaphysics* VII 4–6, 10–12; see also *Topics* 101b38). And at *Metaphysics* 1032b1–2 Aristotle identifies the essence of a sensible substance with its form. Again, in *Metaphysics* VII 12 Aristotle tells us that definitions reached by a process of division contain precisely two terms (1037b29–30): one corresponding to the first genus (e.g. animal); and one corresponding to the last differentia (e.g. two-footed), which picks out the form of the species under investigation (1038a26).<sup>5</sup>

Traditionally, the *Metaphysics* has been taken to hold that sensible forms exclude matter (e.g. Frede, “Definition of Sensible Substances”).<sup>6</sup> In *Metaphysics* VII 8, for example, Aristotle argues that forms themselves do not come to be on the grounds that they do not contain matter:

It is clear from what has been said that the thing spoken of in the sense of form and substance is not generated but only the compound that is called after it

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alternative hypothesis here. As we shall see, there is evidence that the project of generating definitions is closely tied to the broader explanatory goals of *PA* II–IV. Lennox, *Parts of Animals*, e.g. 206–7. This would accord with the *Analytics*’ view that definition and explanation are two-sides of the same project rather than separate projects conducted independently of one another (*APo.* II 1–2, 8–10).

<sup>4</sup>Compare the three approaches canvassed in Lennox, “Aristotle’s *methodos*”, 18.

<sup>5</sup>*PA* I 2–3 suggests that Aristotle continued to employ the theory of definition by genus and differentiae in the biological works. But he argues there that species must be defined by *multiple* differentiae located at the ends of *multiple* branches of division, not by a single differentia obtained by a single line of division. For a suggestion on how to reconcile this with the *Metaphysics* VII 12 account see Charles, *Meaning and Essence*, 313, 330.

<sup>6</sup>This interpretation of Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* has come to be associated with what David Charles (personal communication) calls ‘pure’ forms.

and that everything that comes to be contains matter and that one part [sc. of the generated thing] is matter and the other form.

(*Metaphysics* VII 8, 1033b16–19)

Aristotle's argument in VII 8 appears to rest on the claim, introduced earlier in VII 7, that all things that come to be and pass away contain matter since matter is what makes them "capable of being and not being" (1032a20–2). Since forms are not subject to these changes, it stands to reason that they do not contain matter.<sup>7</sup>

*Metaphysics* VII 10–11 has also be taken to exclude matter from the definition of sensible (natural) forms.<sup>8</sup> Considering the following passage from VII 10:

If, then, there is matter, form, and the thing composed from these, and if both matter, form, and the compound are substance, then even matter is in a sense part of a thing while in a sense it is not but the only parts of the thing are the elements of which the definition of its form consists. For example, flesh is not part of concavity (flesh being the matter in which it is produced) but part of snubness, and the bronze is a part of the particular statue but not of the statue *qua* form.

(*Metaphysics* VII 10, 1035a1–7)

Aristotle offers two examples here to illustrate the point of the chapter:

- (1) Flesh (= matter) is not a part of concavity (= form), and so is excluded from its definition, but it is a part of snubness (= composite) and so is included in its definition.<sup>9</sup>
- (2) Likewise, bronze is not a part of the statue's form, but it is part of the whole composite statue, and so bronze is included in the definition of the statue as composite but not in the definition of the statue as form.

He later adds a third example:

- (3) Bones, muscle, and flesh are parts of the human composite but not parts of the human form, and so a definition of the human form will exclude those material parts (1035a17–21).

<sup>7</sup>Compare *GC* II 9, 335a34–b5.

<sup>8</sup>This interpretation is defended by Gill, *Aristotle on Substance*, 126–8, Frede, "Definition of Sensible Substances", and Johansen, *Powers*, 155–6. For a very different interpretation of these chapters see Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics*. This alternative forms the basis for the second version of our hypothesis considered below.

<sup>9</sup>I take snubness here as a model for the compound on a par with the composite statue in the follow-up example (*kai* at 1035a6 connects, rather than contrasts, the two examples). Indeed, when Aristotle summarizes the point a few lines later (a26), it is explicitly treated there as a composite of matter (flesh) and form (concavity) on a par with the bronze ring (see also *Metaphysics* 1025b30–1026a7, 1030b17).

Aristotle summarizes the point of these examples thusly:

All those things in which the form and the matter are taken together [sc. the composite], e.g. the snub or the bronze circle, are destroyed into these and their matter is a part of them. But those things that do not involve matter but are without matter and whose definitions (*logoi*) are definitions of the form alone, these do not pass away, either not at all or at any rate not in this way. Therefore, these materials are principles and parts of *the composite*, while they are neither parts nor principles of *the form*.

(1035a25–32; see also 1037a24–9)

The doctrine in *Metaphysics* VII 10–11 turns on a distinction Aristotle makes between the material parts (*moria hōs hulē*) of a composite substance and the parts of its form (e.g. 1035b31–4, 1037a24–5). According to the first version of our hypothesis, only the latter kind of parts (soul parts) will show up in a proper definition of the animal form; the former (bodily parts) are included only in the account of the composite.

There is some evidence that Aristotle held this same view in the *Parts of Animals*. At *PA* 643b26–7 Aristotle says that the aim of division is to grasp the *eidē* of particular animals. If we translate *eidos* as ‘form’ here, then it is reasonable to expect *PA* II–IV to be aimed at defining the forms of particular animals. There are other passages that seem to exclude matter from those forms. At *PA* 640a32–3, for example, Aristotle identifies a craft (*technē*) with the form of the product without matter. Given the close analogy between nature and craft, it is reasonable to think that the formal nature of an animal will also exclude matter.<sup>10</sup> Again, Aristotle’s doctrine of conditional necessity seems to imply that the definition of the form, which serves as the starting-point of final cause explanations, excludes any reference to the matter and changes explained by it.<sup>11</sup> Finally, in the teleological argument at the beginning of *PA* II 1 Aristotle explicitly states that form and being are prior in definition (*tô[i] logô[i]*) to matter and coming-to-be (*PA* II 1, 646a24–b4). And on Aristotle’s account, *A* is prior in definition to *B* just in case *A* can be defined without mentioning *B* but *B* cannot be defined without reference to *A* (*Metaphysics* 1034b30–2, 1035b4–11, 1049b12–17).

According to the first version of our hypothesis, then, *PA* I includes among the aims of a scientific study of living things definitions of ‘pure’ species forms, which exclude reference to the materials and changes that are only conditionally necessary for their realization. If this is right, however, then it does not look like *PA* II–IV is attempting to carry out the definitional project outlined in *PA* I after all. The problem is that *PA* II–IV often includes material parts in the essence of various kinds of animals, including blood

<sup>10</sup>This remark comes in the context of an argument about natural generation (*PA* I 1, 640a15–33) that finds a close parallel in *Metaphysics* VII 7 (1032a24–b14) where Aristotle also identifies the essence with the form of the product without the matter.

<sup>11</sup>See, especially, *PA* 639b13–640a10 (see also *Physics* II 9, 200a33–5).

(678a33–4, 695b19–20), lungs (669b12), body segments (682b28–9), claws (684a34), distinctive types of arm (685b15–17), wings (693b2–13), and so forth.<sup>12</sup> This does not sit well with the claim that *PA* II–IV aims at definitions of ‘pure’ species forms.

## Version 2: impure forms

There are two ways to accommodate the fact that *PA* II–IV includes matter in the definitions of animals while preserving the central thesis of this paper that the inquiry in *PA* II–IV is conducted in accordance with the definitional aims of *PA* I. One is to accept that biology aims at defining animal forms but rethink what a definition of those forms will look like. According to this (second) version of our hypothesis, the *PA* treats natural forms as ‘impure’ in the sense that they include matter as part of their make-up.<sup>13</sup>

At this point it will be useful to introduce Caston’s (“How Hylomorphic”, 35–8) distinction between strong and moderate hylomorphism. Moderate hylomorphism holds that a natural compound is inseparable from its form and matter, both in existence and in account, but denies that those components are equally inseparable from one another. Specifically, while the form of a natural compound is incapable of *existing* in separation from its matter, it is separable *in account* from it; natural forms are definable apart from matter. For example, while the capacity for locomotion cannot exist in separation from motor organs, the definition of that capacity will not make reference to those material parts. By contrast, strong hylomorphism treats natural forms, unlike mathematical forms, as *essentially* matter-involving (they are ‘impure’) and so cannot be defined without mentioning that matter of which they are forms.

Interestingly, defenders of this interpretation also claim to find evidence for it in *Metaphysics* VII 10–11. For example, in *Metaphysics* VII 11 Aristotle criticizes the view of Socrates the Younger on the grounds that it encourages us to think that a human can be defined without its parts just as the circle can be defined without bronze (1036b25–8). But, Aristotle goes on to say, an animal is something perceptible and so cannot be defined without reference to change and hence not without reference to its parts being in a certain condition: “For it is not a hand in any condition that is a part of the human but only when it can perform its function and so must be ensouled; one that is not ensouled is not a hand” (b28–32). This passage comes on the heels of a discussion of the Platonists, who concentrate exclusively on forms and ignore the matter altogether (1036b21–4). In light of this, it is

<sup>12</sup>These passages are collected and discussed in Gotthelf, *Teleology*, Ch. 10. I agree with Gotthelf that Aristotle’s language in these passages indicates that he is talking about what is present in the account of a thing’s essence (e.g. 685b15: *logos tês ousias*).

<sup>13</sup>Charles, “Aristotle’s Psychological Theory”, Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*.

tempting to read Aristotle's criticism of Socrates the Younger as an endorsement of so-called impure forms. On this reading, Aristotle's point is that *the form* of a human cannot be defined without reference to change and thus not without its material parts (in contrast to those other Platonists).<sup>14</sup>

As far the *Metaphysics* is concerned, I find the debate between pure and impure forms rather intractable because in most of the disputed passages it is unclear whether Aristotle is making a point about forms or composites.<sup>15</sup> For example, when Aristotle criticizes Socrates the Younger by saying that his view makes one suppose that it is possible for a human to exist without its matter, it is unclear whether 'human' here refers to the composite human (as the purists claim) or the human form (as the impurists claim). The more immediate question is whether there is clear evidence for ascribing impure forms to Aristotle in the *Parts of Animals*. If so, then we would expect PA II–IV to include material parts in the definition of animal forms. For those forms are (on Version 2) *essentially* matter-involving. However, as I will argue now, the evidence is too weak to ascribe this radical view to the PA.<sup>16</sup>

Consider PA I 3, 643a24–7 again. There Aristotle says:

[A1] ... the form (*to eidos*) is the differentia in the matter.

(Lennox translation)

Peramatzis (Forthcoming) reads this as a technical definition of a biological form. As such, he takes [A1] as direct evidence that biological forms are essentially matter-involving; for matter is mentioned right there in the definition of what it is to be that kind of form.<sup>17</sup> But this is not the only way to translate the passage. It is widely recognized that Aristotle sometimes uses *eidos* to refer to form (as opposed to matter) and sometimes to a species (as opposed to a genus).<sup>18</sup> The latter gives us the alternative translation:

[A2] ... the species is the differentia in the matter.<sup>19</sup>

Since Aristotle routinely identifies the differentia with form while the genus is associated with matter (e.g. *Metaphysics* 1038a5–25), [A2] could be read as the claim that a species (the entity whose essence we are trying to define by means of division) is a kind of composite consisting of a certain form (e.g. two-footedness) *in* a certain matter (e.g. an animal body). Understood

<sup>14</sup>See Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 137.

<sup>15</sup>For a detailed examination of the *Metaphysics* debate see Meister, "Purity of Forms".

<sup>16</sup>The following is based on arguments found in Peramatzis (Forthcoming). I do not have space to give a point-by-point rebuttal of all of Peramatzis' arguments.

<sup>17</sup>Peramatzis (Forthcoming): "... it is of the essence of the form to be a matter-involving difference" or "the matter-involving form is essentially the difference".

<sup>18</sup>Balme translates *eidos* as "species" throughout PA I 2–3. I will pass over the long and complicated history of the *genos-eidos* distinction among interpreters of Aristotle's biology (Balme, "GENOS and EIDOS"), which is not relevant to the argument here.

<sup>19</sup>Ogle (in Barnes' *Complete Works*) over-translates the Greek but in the same spirit: "A species is constituted by the combination of differentia and matter".



in this way, [A2] does not commit Aristotle to strong hylomorphism since it makes a point about the species-composite not its form.<sup>20</sup>

However, suppose we accept [A1] as a translation of *PA* 643a24–7. I do not see why it needs to be taken as a technical definition of what it is to be a biological form. And so, there is no reason to take Aristotle to be asserting that matter is part of the essence of that form. The target of Aristotle's attack in *PA* I 2–3 are the Platonists who define each atomic species in terms a single, unique, and indivisible differentia obtained through a single line of bifurcated division. It follows from this that there must be a one-to-one correspondence between the number of final differentiae reached through division and the number of indivisible species in the world (*PA* 643a16–26). [A1] supports this claim by reminding the reader that the indivisible species we are attempting to define in biology are actual matter-form composites and not abstract Forms that exist apart from the sensible world.<sup>21</sup> Both [A2] and the alternative interpretation of [A1] strike me as plausible ways to read the text. And both are compatible with moderate hylomorphism.

Peramatzis also finds evidence for strong hylomorphism in the actual accounts presented in *PA* II–IV. I have already noted several passages where Aristotle includes various material features in the essence of different kinds of animal. The following two passages will serve as a model:

[B] ... just as the being for a bird (*to ornithi einai*) is constituted from something, so too having a lung is present in the essence (*ousia*) of these animals.  
(*PA* 669b11–12)

[C] ... being blooded is in the essence of birds (*hē tou ornithos ousia*) along with being winged ...

(*PA* 693b6–7, translated after Lennox)

Peramatzis argues that Aristotle's language in these passages suggests that we are dealing with essence-defining accounts. Indeed, the second passage looks like it is part of a formal cause explanation where the property of being two-footed is explained by reference to features in the definition of a bird: since a bird is essentially a blooded animal with wings, it follows

<sup>20</sup>One could accept that *eidos* in [A2] refers to a species but argue that a species is identical with its form. However, at *Metaphysics* 1033b25–6 (see also 1035b27–5, 1037a5–7) Aristotle distinguishes the form from both the concrete individual (e.g. Socrates), on the one hand, which he compares a particular bronze sphere, and from certain composite kinds (e.g. human, animal), on the other, which he compares to “the bronze sphere in general (*holós*)”. This, together with *PA* 645a34–5, supports the idea that *eidos* can not only be translated as ‘form’ and ‘species’ but that these pick out distinct entities within his hylomorphism.

<sup>21</sup>This passage may be intended to buttress the previous objection that the Platonists cannot accommodate common differentiae (*PA* 643a7–15). Alternatively, Aristotle may be arguing that it is absurd to suppose that Platonic division would manage to identify an exhaustive set of unique and indivisible differentiae equal in number to the *actual* species of animal there are in the world (as opposed to their own self-serving list of abstract Forms).

that it must be two-footed.<sup>22</sup> If the object of definition is always a form, then it stands to reason that [B] and [C] mean to include those material features in the forms of the animals under investigation.

But things are not quite that straightforward. I agree with Peramatzis that Aristotle's language in these passages suggests that these material parts are included in the definition of the essence of those kinds. But I disagree that he means to include these in their form.

Peramatzis' interpretation turns on two assumptions: (i) a definition of *X* specifies its essence; and (ii) the essence of *X* (that in virtue of which it is an *X* or what it is to be an *X*) is identical with its form. While Aristotle may have held (ii) in the central books of the *Metaphysics* (see Frede, "Definition of Sensible Substances"), it is not clear that he is committed to it in his scientific works. In the *Posterior Analytics*, Aristotle's expression of choice for essence is *to ti esti* ("the what-it-is"),<sup>23</sup> which is the same expression he associates most with definition in the *PA* (e.g. 651b17–18, 652a19–23). And in *Metaphysics* VI 1 he argues that the *ti esti* for a natural compound includes *both* its form *and* its matter (not just its form):

But we must not fail to notice the manner in which essence (*to to ên einai*) and definition (*logos*) occur, since our inquiry cannot be conducted without them. Of things defined and that have essences (*tôn horizomenôn kai tôn ti esti*), some are like the snub while others are like concavity. The difference is that the snub is combined with matter (for the snub is a concave-nose), whereas concavity is without perceptible matter. If all natural things are spoken of like the snub (e.g. nose, eye, face, flesh, bone, and in general animal; leaf, root, bark, and in general plant), for the definition of them cannot be given without reference to change and so always contains matter, it is clear how we must inquire into and define the essence (*to ti esti*) of natural things and why it is the purview of natural science to study some parts of the soul, viz. all those that are not without matter.

(*Metaphysics* VI 1, 1025b29–1026a7; see also *Physics* II 2, Lennox, "Investigating Snubness")

Aristotle's primary examples of natural things (*ta phusika*) in this passage are all examples of natural compounds and not forms. His point is that natural compounds not only have definable essences but that, just like the snub, the definition of their essence will mention both their form and their matter.<sup>24</sup> In light of this, it would be perfectly natural for Aristotle to speak of 'the being for', or 'substance of', a bird (*PA* 693b6–7) or a breather (*PA*

<sup>22</sup>Compare *PA* I 1, 640a33–5. The explanation for avian bipedalism at *PA* 693b7–13 depends on principles developed in *Progression of Animals*.

<sup>23</sup>See *APo.* 89b25, 90a32, 90b3–4, 92a34–5, 93a29, 93b15.

<sup>24</sup>Peramatzis (*Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 100–1) concedes that this passage primarily concerns natural compounds but argues that Aristotle means to extend the conclusion to their forms as well. Although I disagree, this is compatible with the point I wish to draw here (see below).

669b11–12) in cases where he is focused on the whole composite animal and not just its form.<sup>25</sup>

Let us take stock of the paper up to this point. My working hypothesis is that the causal investigations in *PA* II–IV are conducted in accordance with the definitional aims set out in *PA* I. According to the first iteration of this hypothesis, *PA* I identifies the object of those definitions with ‘pure’ forms that exclude reference to matter. The problem with this proposal was that *PA* II–IV includes material parts in the essence of animal kinds (e.g. lungs, wings, blood). One way we tried to accommodate this fact while preserving our working hypothesis was to accept that definitions in *PA* aim at forms but deny that those forms exclude matter. According to this second proposal, *PA* I treats animal forms as essentially matter-involving (they are ‘impure’). However, we found that the evidence for attributing this view to the *PA* is too weak.

### Version 3: the matter of the composite

I now want to propose a third alternative that is also compatible with the fact that *PA* II–IV includes matter in the essence of different animal kinds but does not require taking that matter to be part of the form itself. According to this alternative, the object of definition in natural science is *the composite* (not its form).<sup>26</sup> And the best way to define the composite is to attempt to define its matter.

This interpretation is grounded in the following passage from *Parts of Animals* I, and it is worth quoting in full:

[D] While air and water are matter for bodies (for it is out of things of this kind that all natural bodies are constituted), if human and animal and the parts of these are natural, then we would also have to speak about flesh and bone and blood and all of the uniform parts. And likewise, about the non-uniform parts, for example face, hand, foot, both what sort of thing each of them is and with respect to what sort of capacity. For it is not enough to say from what they are constituted (e.g. from fire or earth). [E] It is just as if we were speaking about a bed<sup>27</sup> or any other such thing: we would [E1] attempt to

<sup>25</sup>We can concede Frede’s (“Definition of Sensible Substances”) point that only those accounts that mention the form alone count as definitions in the strict sense, while those that mention both form and matter together are ‘definitions’ only in some weaker or extended sense. All that is necessary to insist on here is that we should expect to find the latter type of accounts in the *PA*, since those are the type proper to natural science. It makes no difference to my argument whether these count as definitions in the strict metaphysical sense.

<sup>26</sup>See also Lennox, “Aristotle’s *methodos*”, 18.

<sup>27</sup>Peramatzis (Forthcoming) uses this passage as evidence for strong hylomorphism. The difference is that, whereas he takes the example of a bed to refer to a form, I take it to refer to the *composite* bed (which is the most natural way of reading the claim just below that a bed is a ‘this-in-that’). While Aristotle does draw an analogy with the form of the bed at *PA* 641a14–21, by that point the discussion has shifted away from talking about the material parts of composite animals (640b15–29) to the proper way of conceptualizing their forms (640b29–641a6). In light of this, I suggest that

define its form rather than its matter (e.g. the bronze or the wood); if not (*ei de mê*), then [E2] we should at least attempt to define the matter of the composite (*tên ge tou sunolou*). For a bed is a 'this-in-that' or a 'this-such', and so we would have to mention its form and structure. For the formal nature (*hê kata tên morphên phusis*) is more authoritative (*kuriôtera*) [sc. with respect to determining what a thing is] than the material nature.

(PA I 1, 640b15–29)

Aristotle has just finished discussing the traditional natural scientists who "investigated the material principle of things and that sort of cause" (PA 640b4–5). The problem is that those earlier thinkers had focused exclusively on the most fundamental materials out of which natural bodies are constituted (e.g. earth, air, water, fire). While Aristotle agrees that these are matter for natural bodies – "for it is out of things of this kind that all natural bodies are constituted" – since animals are also natural, he argues that an inquiry into the material principle should also include a discussion of animal parts, both the uniform ones (e.g. flesh, bone) and the non-uniform ones (e.g. hand, foot); for these constitute the matter out of which animals are composed (PA 646a13–b27, GA 715a9–11). Text [E] then presents two alternative approaches to definition: [E1] define the form rather than the matter; if not, then [E2] attempt to define the matter of the composite. According to the third version of our hypothesis, it is the second alternative [E2] that constitutes the proper aim of PA.<sup>28</sup>

Now, at first glance, the way Aristotle presents the two approaches to definition in [E] suggests that [E2] is the second-best alternative.<sup>29</sup> For he seems to be saying that one should try to define the matter of the composite only if one cannot (should not?) define its form alone. If [E2] really does capture the aims of PA II–IV, as the third alternative proposes, then we need to explain why the first approach [E1] is not preferable here.<sup>30</sup>

To answer this question, I want to turn to a passage from *De anima* I 1 where Aristotle argues that the object of definition in natural science is the composite. The passage comes in the context of a discussion about how

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'parts' at PA 641a16 should be taken to refer to parts of soul, which is what Aristotle compares to the form of the bed there.

<sup>28</sup>An anonymous reviewer of this paper suggested that the context of PA 640b15–29 does not easily lend itself to being read as a programmatic passage; it is merely a negative criticism of those natural philosophers. However, PA I is one long argument about the norms governing the natural inquiry into living things (PA 639a1–14, Lennox, "Unity and Purpose"). And so it is reasonable to interpret [D] and [E] in light of that project. In other words, Aristotle is not only criticizing the way the earlier natural scientists conducted their inquiry but also spelling out how natural science should go about defining animals and their parts. Compare Aristotle's methodological remarks at PA I 5, 645a30–b1 (discussed below) where he recalls this point about how one should proceed when defining/explaining the parts of composite animals.

<sup>29</sup>See Lennox (*Parts of Animals*, 137).

<sup>30</sup>I am not suggesting that Aristotle thinks [E2] is superior in the unqualified sense. Rather, it is superior relative to his project in the PA which (I am claiming) aims at defining the *composite* animal. [E1] would be preferable for Aristotle's project in (say) the *De anima*, which is aimed at defining the animal form (soul) rather than the composite animal (see also PA 641a14–b9).

we should define those functions and affections that are common to body and soul (e.g. anger, fear, perception). Aristotle says:

It is just as if the account of a house was of this sort, that it is a shelter capable of guarding against destruction by wind, rain, and heat: one will say that it is stones, bricks, and timber and the other will say that it is the form in these for the sake of which these things exist. Which of these is the [sc. Aristotelian] natural scientist? The one who speaks about the matter and ignores the form or the one who is concerned with the form alone? Or rather is it the one who is concerned with the thing composed from both (*ex amphin*)?

(DA 403b4–9)

I do not want to get bogged down in the debate over whether *De anima* I 1 treats psychological forms as pure or impure.<sup>31</sup> The point I want to take away from this passage is simply the idea that natural science should study the *composite* and that a proper scientific definition of a natural composite will mention *both* its form *and* matter. This is reinforced by the analogy Aristotle draws with the house: both the one who speaks about the matter and ignores the form, and the one who is concerned with the form alone, gives an incomplete definition of the composite house. If PA 640b15–29 has this same doctrine in the background, then it is clear why Aristotle should prefer [E2] to [E1]. A definition that mentions the form rather than the matter would yield an incomplete definition of the composite animal, which is the proper object of study for a natural science of living things.

But why wouldn't [E2] also generate an incomplete definition of the composite? After all, DA 403a29–b9 also rejects the materialist's account of anger in terms of seething blood and heat alone, just as it rejects the account of the house that mentions stones, bricks, and timber but ignores the form. So why would PA 640b24–7 recommend defining the matter of the composite as the better alternative? However, Aristotle is not saying there that a scientific definition of a natural composite should mention the matter *alone* and ignore the form. [E2] says that defining the matter is the best alternative because it forces us to bring the form into the definition of the composite as well (though not vice versa): "we should at least attempt to define the matter of the composite ... so we would have to mention its form and structure". This is the key justification for the whole approach to definition in our focal passage, as I shall now attempt to show.

The first thing to notice about PA 640b15–29 is that Aristotle speaks of forms there in purely morphological terms. A more literal translation of the end of the passage might read:

<sup>31</sup>See Charles, "Aristotle's Psychological Theory", and the reply from Caston, "How Hylomorphic". As I see it, this debate suffers from the same ambiguity mentioned earlier in connection with the *Metaphysics* debate, namely, it is unclear whether by "functions common to body and soul" (e.g. anger) Aristotle is talking about forms (Charles) or composites (Caston).

... if not, then we would at least attempt to define the matter of the composite; for a bed is a this-in-that or a this-such, so that we would have to speak about its figure (*schêma*) as well as what sort of outward appearance (*idea*) it has. For the nature with respect to the shape (*hê kata tên morphên phusin*) is more authoritative than the material nature.

Aristotle immediately criticizes this way of conceptualizing animal forms, which he associates with Democritus:

Now, if it is in virtue of its figure and colour that each of the animals and their parts is what it is, then Democritus might be speaking correctly; for he appears to assume this. Note that he says it is apparent to everyone what a human being is by reference to its shape (*ti tên morphên estin ho anthrôpos*), since it is known by way of its structure and colour. And yet, although the corpse is the same with respect to the shape of its outward configuration, it is nevertheless not a human being. Further, it is impossible for something in any condition whatsoever, e.g. being bronze or wooden, to be a hand except homonymously like a doctor in a picture. For such a hand will not be able to perform its proper function, just as stone flutes will not be able to do theirs or the doctor in the picture. In the same way, none of the parts of a corpse is any longer, e.g. an eye or a hand. What Democritus says, then, is too unqualified and is said in the same way as a carpenter might speak about a wooden hand.

(PA 640b29–641a6)

Aristotle does two things here. First, he replaces Democritus' morphological concept of form as the shape and structure of the body with his own functional concept of soul.<sup>32</sup> Second, and more importantly, he argues that the matter of the composite animal (the body and its parts) is definitionally dependent on its form. For example, what it is to be an eye or a hand is to be an instrument for executing various soul-functions.<sup>33</sup> It follows from this that we cannot define those material parts without also mentioning the function for whose sake they exist. This is why Aristotle says at the end of our focal passage that in attempting to define the matter of the composite will also have to mention its form.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup>Kullmann (*Aristoteles*, 305): "Dies ist eine simple, aber für Aristoteles wichtige Aussage: Die äußere natürliche Gestalt ist wichtiger als die materielle Beschaffenheit, wobei die natürliche Gestalt jedoch nicht auf die geometrische Umrißform und Farbe reduziert werden kann".

<sup>33</sup>Aristotle makes this point explicitly at the end of PA I 5 (645b15–20) and again at the beginning of PA II 1 (646b10–27). See Charles (*Meaning and Essence*, 313–14) and Lennox (*Parts of Animals*, 182).

<sup>34</sup>I suspect Aristotle says 'define the matter of the composite' rather than 'define both the matter and the form' in order to preserve the unity of natural inquiry (see also *Physics* II 2). For an exceptionally clear discussion of this point see Lennox, "Investigating snubness". Lennox (180–1) frames Aristotle's approach to natural science there as an inquiry into the natural form of the composite, which (on his account) forces us to mention its matter. I agree that the teleological unity of matter and form grounds the unity of natural inquiry, but my account has it the other way around: we inquire into the natural matter of the composite, which forces us to mention the form for whose sake it exists. By contrast, at least if purism is correct, then one *can* define the form of a natural composite without mentioning its matter.

There is no shortage of evidence that *PA* II–IV is aimed at generating scientific definitions of animal parts (the matter out of which animal bodies are composed). The following is a brief sample of passages:

We have stated, regarding blood, serum, and soft and hard fat, both what each of them is (*to estin*) and on account of what causes (*dia tinas aitiās*) each of them exists.

(*PA* 651b17–18)

On account of what (*dia ti*), then, those animals with marrow have it has been stated. And from these considerations it is also evident what marrow is (*ti esti*), viz. the enclosed, concocted residue of the bloody nourishment apportioned to bones and fish-spine.

(*PA* 652a19–23)

Regarding the heart, then, what sort of thing it is, what it is for the sake of, and the cause owing to which it is present in those animals that have it, let so much be said.

(*PA* 667b13–15 Lennox translation)

We need to examine again from the beginning the blooded, live-bearing animals, starting with those of their previously mentioned parts that remain. Once these parts have been defined, we will go on to speak about the blooded, egg-laying animals in the same way.

(685b29–33)

As these passages make clear, the aim of defining animal parts is closely tied to the explanatory goals of the *PA*. Even when Aristotle does not explicitly formulate the definition, the explanation for why a given part belongs to certain animals (which states the cause) provides the ingredients for a corresponding definition stating what that part is (which states the essence).<sup>35</sup> For example, the explanation for why some animals have marrow provides the ingredients for constructing a proper definition of the part as “the enclosed, concocted residue of the bloody nourishment apportioned to bones and fish-spine”. *PA* III 6 is a good example of this sort of joint project. In the first part of the chapter Aristotle works towards a definition of the lung as an organ for cooling the blood by means of air. This is supposed to tell us both *what* a lung is (669a15: “the lung is an instrument for respiration”) and *why* land-animals have that part.

There is good reason to suppose that the composites whose matter we are attempting to define in [E2] (the analogue of the bed) also includes animal parts; we should attempt to define *their* matter too.<sup>36</sup> At the outset of *PA* II 1, for example, Aristotle identifies three levels of composition (*tôn*

<sup>35</sup>Lennox (*Parts of Animals*, e.g. 206–7). This is what we should expect if the *PA* is following the *Analytics* model of scientific inquiry where definition and explanation are presented as two sides of the same epistemic coin (*APo.* II 1–2, 8–10).

<sup>36</sup>I am grateful to Emily Kress for pressing me on this point.

*suntheseôn*) in animals, where the entities existing at one level constitute the matter from which the higher-level compounds are constituted:

Since there are three levels of composition, one might put first [L1] composition from the so-called elements (e.g. earth, air, water, fire), though perhaps it is better to speak of composition from element-potentials ... For moist, dry, hot, and cold are the matter of the composite bodies (*hulê tôn sunthetôn sômatôn*). ... Second [L2] is the composition of the nature of the uniform parts within animals (e.g. of bone, flesh, and other things of this sort) out of the first things. Third and last in the series is [L3] the composition of the nature of the non-uniform parts (e.g. of face, hand, and such parts).

(PA 646a12–23)

I agree with Lennox (*Parts of Animals*, 180) that the first composite bodies at 646a16–17 are the traditional elements (earth, air, fire, water).<sup>37</sup> These constitute the L1-Composites that have the element-potentials (hot, cold, dry, moist) as their L1-Matter and in turn constitute the L2-Matter of the uniform parts (e.g. flesh, bone).<sup>38</sup> However, in the biological works Aristotle tends to treat blood (or its analogue) as the proximate matter of the uniform parts (e.g. PA 651a13–15) rather than the traditional elements. This yields the following hierarchy of material composition:

(L1) Composition of blood out of the four element-potentials.

(L2) Composition of the uniform parts out of blood.

(L3) Composition of the non-uniform parts out of the uniform parts.

Since animal parts are themselves treated as composites with a proximate matter of their own, it is reasonable to include those parts among the composites whose matter Aristotle says we should be attempting to define in PA II–IV.

Interestingly, PA II 1 only carries the analysis of composition as far as L3-Composites (the non-uniform/instrumental parts), which Aristotle calls “the completion” of the series (*teleutaia*, 646a23) and the “end and limit” of development (*to telos ... kai to peras*, b8–9). This might be taken to suggest that the composites whose matter Aristotle is attempting to define in PA II–IV are simply animal parts and not the animals to which they belong. However, PA II 1 clearly means to extend the analysis to whole animals (see PA 646b10–12). And so, we can add a fourth layer to the account:

<sup>37</sup>On this reading, “the matter of the elements” at 646b5 refers to the element-potentials.

<sup>38</sup>When Aristotle says, “perhaps it is better to speak of composition from element-potentials”, he is not suggesting (as I had previously thought) that we *replace* the traditional elements with his own element-potentials; the traditional elements are still included in his ontology. His point is that it is better to carry the analysis further down and begin with the composition of the traditional elements out of the element-potentials (see also *Meteor.* IV 1). The traditional elements are only ‘so-called’ here because the word *stoicheiôn* is typically reserved for the most fundamental building blocks, which is the role played by his element-potentials (hot, cold, moist, dry).



(L4) Composition of whole animals out of non-uniform/instrumental parts.

This is confirmed by a passage in *GA I 1*, which looks like a summary of the doctrine in *PA II 1*:

The parts are matter for animals: the non-uniform parts are matter for the whole animal, the uniform parts for the non-uniform ones, while the so-called elements of bodies are the matter for these.

(*GA 715a9–11*)

If this is right, then the composites whose matter Aristotle is attempting to define in *PA II–IV* will include both animals and their parts.

This interpretation tracks the order of discussion in *PA II–IV* quite well.<sup>39</sup> *PA II 2–3* starts by defining the element-potentials in order to facilitate an understanding of the essence of blood whose matter they are (*PA 649b24–5*; Lennox, *Parts of Animals*, 197). *PA II 4* next inquires into the nature of blood, which serves as matter for the uniform parts. *PA II 5* then commences an inquiry into the uniform parts, which in turn serve as matter for the non-uniform (instrumental) parts. Finally, *PA II 10* turns to the non-uniform parts out of which whole animals are composed (which takes up the remainder of the treatise). At each stage, I have argued, Aristotle can be seen as attempting to define (/explain) the lower-level matter out of which the higher-level compound is constructed.

One can accept the third proposal that *PA II–IV* is aimed at defining the material parts of animals (e.g. flesh, marrow, heart, lung) while stopping short of the claim that Aristotle is also concerned with definitions of animal kinds themselves, including indivisible species (e.g. Pellegrin, “Zoology Without Species”). However, there is a case to be made for that more inclusive reading. In *PA I 2–3*, for example, Aristotle is clear that the things we are attempting to grasp by means of division are indivisible species of animal (Balme, *De Partibus*, 101–19). The stated aim of those chapters is to demonstrate that “it is impossible for those who divide in two to grasp any of the particular animals” (644a10–11; see also 642b5–6). The context makes it clear that by ‘the particular animals’ Aristotle means particular indivisible species (e.g. 644a1–10: human).<sup>40</sup> The final definition of the species is formed by collecting together all of the final differentiae (including parts) obtained through *multiple* axes of division into a single account.<sup>41</sup> While I

<sup>39</sup>With the following see Gotthelf, *Teleology*, 158–9.

<sup>40</sup>See also *PA 643a16–20*, 643b25–6; see also 639a15–17 (human, lion, ox), 644a33–4 (sparrows, cranes). See also Lennox (*Parts of Animals*, 153).

<sup>41</sup>Pellegrin (“Zoology Without Species”, 102–3) agrees that *PA 644a1–10* sets out a procedure for generating definitions by collecting together differentiae obtained through multiple lines of division. But he claims that the passage is aimed at defining ‘the human way of having feet’ (the part) and not the human species itself. I do not see any good reason for taking the passage that way. On the contrary, this example is supposed to show how ‘it is impossible for those who divide in two to grasp any of the particular animals’. This makes it clear that *PA 644a1–10* is sketching out a procedure for defining

agree with Pellegrin that *PA* II–IV does not provide full definitions of any species of animal, I do not take this as evidence that *PA* is not aimed at those definitions anymore than the fact that *PA* II–IV does not contain a single demonstration is evidence that those books do not aim at demonstrative knowledge (Lennox *Aristotle's Philosophy of Biology*, 5; Gotthelf, *Teleology*, 153–8). Having said that, we have already seen examples from *PA* II–IV where Aristotle mentions which parts will be present in the account of some particular animal kind (e.g. texts [B] and [C] above). This at least points towards a concern with definitions of animal kinds and not just their parts. In the end, however, my argument in this paper does not turn on whether the *PA* is simply aimed at defining the parts ('the matter of the composite') or whether it is ultimately aimed at defining the animals to which those parts belong (e.g. humans, lions, sparrows).

### The unity of the *PA*: some concluding remarks

In this paper I have explored three versions of the claim that, whatever else Aristotle is attempting to do in *PA* II–IV, it includes a search for definitions and that this project is conducted in accordance with the recommendations from *PA* I. We can summarize these three versions as follows:

#### *Version 1: pure forms*

- (1) *PA* II–IV aims at defining forms.
- (2) A proper definition of those forms excludes reference to matter.

#### *Version 2: impure forms*

- (1) *PA* II–IV aims at defining forms.
- (2) A proper definition of those forms will mention matter as part of its essence.

#### *Version 3: the matter of the composite*

- (1) *PA* II–IV aims at defining the matter of the composite.
- (2) A proper definition of that matter will mention the form for whose sake it exists.

I have defended Version 3 as the most promising interpretation. According to this proposal, the object of definition in natural science is the composite. And definitions of natural composites must refer to their form *and* matter

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whole animals (e.g. human) by collecting together multiple final differentiae (e.g. two-feet, hands) located at the ends of multiple branches of division. Compare *PA* 693b6–7 (text [C] above).

together. In *PA I* Aristotle argues that the most effective way of accomplishing this goal is to define the matter of the composite, since doing so forces us to bring into the definition the form for whose sake that matter exist (but not vice versa) (*PA* 640b15–29).

If this interpretation is right, then the *Parts of Animals* can be seen as continuing in the tradition of those earlier natural scientists who “investigated the material principle of things and that sort of cause” (640b4–5) but with its own Aristotelian twist.<sup>42</sup> First, as we have seen, Aristotle expands the scope of this inquiry to include animal parts (646a13–b27) since these constitute the matter out of which animals are composed. Second, and more importantly, he reconceptualizes this matter as definitionally-dependent on, and teleologically-oriented towards, the form for whose sake it exists (640b29–641a6, 645b15–20, 646b10–26). It follows from this that we cannot define that matter without also mentioning the form (*PA* 640b26–9, 645a30–b1).

This interpretation of the aims of *PA II–IV* helps loosen the grip of the long-standing view that *PA I* constitutes a “separate” introduction to the biological corpus that is “independent of the remaining three books of *P.A.*, which are factual studies” (Balme, *De Partibus*, 69). On this view, *PA I* can be bracketed off from *PA II–IV* as “a work apart” which “is not so much biology as a philosophical discussion of biology” (84).<sup>43</sup> The thesis defended in this paper gives us a reason to push back against that view by showing how what Aristotle does in *PA II–IV* is precisely what a reader of *PA I* would expect him to be doing.<sup>44</sup> For example, towards the end of *PA I* 5 – in a passage that appears to recall his remarks at *PA* 640b24–9 – Aristotle announces:

Just as one who discusses the parts or equipment of anything should not be thought of as doing so in order to draw attention to the matter, nor for the sake of the matter, but rather in order to draw attention to the whole shape, just as, for instance, in the case of a house too, but not bricks, mortar, and timbers; likewise, one should consider the discussion of nature to be referring to the composite and its whole substantial being rather than to those things which do not happen ever to be separated from the substance of these [sc. the material parts themselves].

(*PA* 645a30–b1 Lennox translation with modifications)

Here Aristotle confirms that we are about to inquire into the matter of the composite (‘the parts or equipment of anything’), in the tradition of the

<sup>42</sup>With the following compare *Physics* II 2, 194a12–b15. Notice that when Aristotle raises the question there, ‘Up to what point should natural science study the form?’, he answers in terms of how one should study the matter (194b10–13).

<sup>43</sup>See also Lennox, *Parts of Animals*, xiii, Gotthelf, *Teleology*, 155–6, and Kullman, *Wissenschaft und Methode*, 1–5; *Aristoteles*, 134ff..

<sup>44</sup>This is how Lennox (*Parts of Animals*, xiii) frames the question about the relation between the actual investigations in *PA II–IV* and the methodological norms set out in *PA I*. And one of the areas that scholars have tended to see a gap between them concerns the role of definitions (see Gotthelf, *Teleology*, 151).

earlier natural scientists, but that we should not be misled into thinking we are inquiring into the matter for its own sake (as they had done) but in order to draw attention to the form of the whole composite. I have argued that this is just what we find Aristotle doing in *PA* II–IV.

Of course, this is compatible with the idea that one of the functions of *PA* I is to establish the philosophical foundations of the study of living nature as a whole. What I am suggesting is that it is also meant as a *specific* introduction to the project carried out in *PA* II–IV itself. The opening chapter of the *De sensu* provides a model for what I have in mind. *De sensu* I opens by announcing that, after having dealt with the soul by itself (presumably in the *De anima*), the next task is to discuss the actions and functions of living things that are common to body and soul, both those that are peculiar to each species and those common to all. Aristotle then raises a series of questions to be pursued within this broader project that extends beyond what he does in the rest of the treatise. Indeed, as Johansen (*Powers*, 263) notes, it is hard to recognize this opening chapter in the closing summary of the treatise at *De sensu* 449b1–4. And yet, no one has suggested that *De sensu* I should be bracketed off as a separate essay independent from the rest of *De sensu*. Instead, it is widely agreed that *De sensu* I functions both as a general introduction to the whole *Parva Naturalia* and as a specific introduction to the inquiry that follows in *De Sensu* itself. The challenge is to make sense of how *De sensu* I accomplishes the latter function.

In the same way, we should resist thinking of *PA* I as an independent set of essays attached to the rest of the treatise by some later editor and instead try to make better sense of how it is also intended to be a specific introduction to the *PA* itself. This paper has attempted to make some headway towards meeting that challenge by highlighting those passages in *PA* I where Aristotle makes specific claims about what he aims to accomplish in *PA* II–IV and how that goal is best achieved.<sup>45</sup>

Finally, this interpretation of the aims of *PA* II–IV provides a more nuanced picture than the one suggested by Pavlopoulos (“Aristotle’s Natural Teleology”). Pavlopoulos argues that the works on living things can be divided up according to the four causes: the *HA* studies the material cause; the *PA* studies the final cause; the *DA* studies the formal cause; and the *GA* studies the efficient cause. While it is certainly true that the *GA* aims to study the efficient cause of animals and their parts (see *GA* 715a1–18), I have argued that the *PA* studies the material cause, not for its own sake, but for the sake of drawing attention to the form which is also the end for the sake of

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<sup>45</sup>In addition to what I have attempted to do here, establishing the unity of the *PA* would also involve emphasizing the continuity between the argument at the end of *PA* I 5 and the opening argument of *PA* II 1, both of which attempt to show how the body and its parts ultimately exist for the sake of “the complex actions and movements that belong to animals as a whole” (646b10–27; see also Gotthelf, *Teleology*, 158–9).

which that matter comes to be. In that case the *PA* can be seen as an integrated study of the material, formal, and final causes of animals and their parts while the *GA* investigates the efficient cause of their development.

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# Aristotle's *Poetics* and Aesthetic Design

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## Abstract

Aristotle's analysis of storytelling and literature in *Poetics* informs the field of instructional design with a description of aesthetic principles that have since been adapted into the creative process of many fields. Often a reference to visual design, the term aesthetics can be applied more robustly to include all elements of design - structure, narrative, rhythm, character, sequencing, to name a few - that can be designed to appeal to the sense or emotions of a user (Batiha et al., 2006). Aristotle believed the Greek Tragedy to be the highest form of storytelling and distinguishes the elements that make it so evocative. Aesthetic quality has been shown to impact learning (Anderson, 2009) and a study of Aristotle's perspective on the Greek Tragedy in the *Poetics* can help designers consider the aesthetic quality of their work.

**Keywords** Aesthetics · Instructional design · Narrative · Emotion · Aristotle · Design · Greek theatre

In the fifth century, poetry was considered a form of teaching and the poet a teacher. With the opportunity to deliver information to a large population in a single event, the poet was responsible to not only instruct his actors and chorus but the public as well (Arnott, 1970). In a study of the effectiveness of the Greek Drama to produce an emotional, visceral and educational experience for an audience, Aristotle produced a theory of Greek Theatre in *Peri poietikes*, or *Poetics* in 330 BC (Landa, 1987). Aristotle's analysis of storytelling and literature informs the field of instructional design with a description of aesthetic principles that have since been adapted into the creative process of many fields. Aristotle's work has influenced the efforts of artists, educators, screenwriters, and designers as the need to communicate information effectively and memorably, and to provide meaningful aesthetic learning experiences, continues today (Parrish, 2007).

Aesthetics and aesthetic learning experiences have a multiplicity of definitions: the philosophical field of aesthetics that answers questions regarding the nature of art and beauty (Zhang, 2009); the psychology of aesthetics (empirical aesthetics) that considers the perception, formulation, and evaluation of objects that incite strong emotions (Chatterjee, 2011).

In design situations, aesthetics is a term often used synonymously with *visual design* but is applied more robustly as the systematic way of structuring and sequencing elements to appeal to the senses or emotions of a user (Batiha et al., 2006). While addressed and discussed in a plethora of ways, Patrick Parrish offers a definition of aesthetic experiences that aesthetically-minded creators could probably agree with as it echoes the widely acknowledged perspectives on education and aesthetics offered by John Dewey. He writes that aesthetic experiences are "those that are immersive, infused with meaning, and felt as coherent and complete" (Parrish, 2007, p. 511).

There is no contention that designers and educators want to create meaningful and immersive learning experiences for their students, but there is doubt that the principles of aesthetic design play an efficacious role in achieving this goal. Some experts believe the attention to visual design or aesthetics is a waste of time. Some claim an aesthetic focus does not produce better results in terms of attention or engagement, or it is a way to distract from poor scholarship (Lynch, 2009). However, the application of aesthetics to designing instructional technology and experiences has been shown to impact usability and credibility, improve user reaction (David & Glore, 2010), enhance engagement and persistence (Glore, 2010; Scribner, 2007) and produce positive emotions for users that result in support of comprehension and transfer (Um et al., 2012). Again, Parrish (2007) states succinctly why aesthetic principles are important for designers to consider. "[They] have parallels in information processing, constructivist, and social learning

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theories because aesthetic experience, in fact, underlies all efforts to find or create meaning” (p. 514) and can “lend the [learning] experience lasting resonance” (p. 513).

*Poetics* is believed to be one of two books on Greek Theatre created from Aristotle’s lecture notes or students’ lecture notes. While it is believed that his book focused on the Greek comedy has been lost, it is his thoughts on the Greek tragedy that we have today. *Poetics* is a response to *The Republic*, which was written by his teacher Plato with whom he studied for approximately 20 years. Unlike Aristotle, Plato argued for strict censorship on poetry and drama as it is “morally suspect.” Plato saw no value in the arts that reflected real life (Landa, 1987). Aristotle contended that poetry and drama are intended to represent reality and are a worthwhile and rational activity. The representation of human emotions, even those extreme emotions found in the Greek tragedy such as pity and fear, are beneficial as they help viewers experience catharsis or the ‘purging’ of these emotions (Landa, 1987; Nicholas, 2019).

At the center of his inquiry, Aristotle includes an analysis of several theatrical pieces from the Greek theatre to determine why some evoke strong emotions while others do not. He specifically focused on Greek tragedy, which he found as the highest form of storytelling. He lays out the six components of tragedy as plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle. Aristotle writes that plot is the first principle as the soul of a tragedy, and places character in second place. He argues that while developing interesting and clear characters is important, the structure and order of the incidences and actions in the story are essential to an evocative narrative and effect catharsis (Nicholas, 2019).

From Aristotle’s perspective, the Greek tragedy has two parts: complication and unraveling. The first half of the tragedy has an antagonist progressing towards a goal that becomes more complicated over time. This complication continues until the moment called *peripeteia*, or reversal, when a significant action or event changes the course of the antagonist moving forward. This reversal is accompanied with the antagonists’ recognition of their new reality, or in Greek, *anagnorisis*. Aristotle claims it is in the intersection of the reversal and recognition that the tragedy transitions from the complication stage to the unravelling stage. Unraveling portrays a scene of suffering: a painful or destructive action – death, bodily agony, or wounds – and a culminating cathartic event. The inclusion of moments of complication, reversal, recognition, and suffering are essential to Aristotle if the objective is to bring the audience or reader to catharsis or purgation. Additionally, the order and sequence of these incidents are what give storytelling and theatrical narrative the power to evoke deep emotions simply by viewing or reading.

How does this apply to instructional design today? Instructional designers are in the business of creating “refined and intensified forms of experience” even if they do not

typically talk about the aesthetics of such activities (Parrish, 2007, p. 514). Instructional designers can look to Aristotle’s work and the work of artists who have applied his ideas for centuries to inform the aesthetic choices they make in creating experiences and technology for learning. The aesthetic quality of a curriculum or technology has been shown to impact learning as users are more tolerable of aesthetic designs, find them easier and more efficient, and trust aesthetically superior designs (Anderson, 2009). Additionally, aesthetic instructional designs provide experiences that evoke emotions which are inseparably connected to cognition (Kim & Pekrun, 2014). Neurobiologist Antonio Damasio wrote that emotion is not a luxury; to the contrary “it plays a critical role in virtually all aspects of learning, reasoning, and creativity. Somewhat surprisingly, it may play a role in the construction of consciousness.” (Damasio, 2004, p. 49). Thus, Aristotle’s *Poetics*, with its focus on cathartic experience and the intentional sequencing of events, has and can affect the efficacy and aesthetic quality of the work produced by instructional designers.

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## Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, and The Third Man Argument

René Ardell Fehr 

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### Abstract

The Third Man argument, as it originated in Plato's *Parmenides*, is unjustly read into Aristotle. The *Parmenides* argument is briefly examined, followed by an analysis of the relevant Aristotelian texts, with a special emphasis on the commentary of Thomas Aquinas. Three different versions of Aristotle's Third Man argument are identified, of which none contain the essential infinite regress that characterizes the *Parmenides* argument. Finally, current scholarship on the Third Man argument, especially as it pertains to Aristotle, is reviewed. In this respect, I note that the overwhelming tendency has been to identify Aristotle's Third Man argument with that of the *Parmenides*, in spite of the fact that Aristotle only once articulates his version of the Third Man argument, and that this articulation is vastly different from its *Parmenides* counterpart. I conclude that contemporary Third Man scholarship must take this into account.

### Keywords

Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, third man, *Metaphysics*, Plato

Few texts of Plato have occasioned as much discussion and as many varying interpretations as his *Parmenides*.<sup>1</sup> The text is notoriously difficult to decipher, and this problem is only compounded by its unique portrayal of a young Socrates who is rather easily bested in debate by an older and wiser Parmenides, the dialogue's titular character. Among the many and various topics of dispute amongst scholars of Plato is the question of the so-called "Third Man" argument and its status both within the dialogue and on its own. The subject of a vast body of literature itself, the Third Man argument was referred to by Aristotle in his

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Parmenides*. The text I am using appears in *The Dialogues of Plato*, volume II, B. Jowett, M.A., trans. (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press, 1964).

works *Metaphysics*<sup>2</sup> and *Sophistical Refutations*,<sup>3</sup> and taken up by subsequent Aristotelean commentators, among these being the medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas.<sup>4</sup> These numerous Aristotelean commentators, as well as those who have commented on the *Parmenides*, have produced a wealth of literature on the Third Man argument. In modern times, the publication of Gregory Vlastos's 1954 article "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*"<sup>5</sup> has sparked a renewed interest in the topic and reinvigorated academic discussion on the Third Man.

The occurrence of the Third Man argument in the *Parmenides* is a curious one; it is presented as a crushing blow to the young Socrates' defense of the theory of Forms, and no refutation of the Third Man is offered or even attempted. As a result, Platonic scholars, such as the aforementioned Vlastos, have devoted much effort to analyzing the validity and soundness of the argument and to attempting to explain what Plato himself thought of it.<sup>6</sup> In a similar manner, Aristotle's few and brief mentions of the "third man", in the context of criticizing Plato, have led many to attribute a *Parmenides*-esque Third Man argument to Aristotle, complete with infinite regress, and to view Aristotle (at least insofar as the Third Man goes) to stand or fall with the argument of the *Parmenides*.

Adding to the intrigue is Thomas's commentary on Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, wherein Thomas comments on three of the four uses of the "third man" therein: in none of these places does Thomas mention the concept of infinite regression, a concept which is central to the *Parmenides*' Third Man argument. As such, I will explore the Third Man arguments as they appear in Plato's *Parmenides* and Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. In doing so I will give special place to Thomas's commentary on the latter work as I believe it to provide a unique and hitherto ignored perspective on the Third Man argument. To this end, I will begin by examining the relevant section of the *Parmenides* before moving on to the text of Aristotle and to Thomas's commentary. Following this, the main modern interpretations of the Third Man argument will be considered. Finally, I will argue that the Third Man argument that appears in the *Parmenides* and those that are mentioned in Aristotle's work ought to be interpreted as separate arguments.

<sup>2</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*. The text I am using appears in Richard McKeon, ed., *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, W. D. Ross, trans. (New York: Random House, 1941).

<sup>3</sup> Aristotle, *Sophistical Refutations*. An English translation by W. A. Pickard-Cambridge exists online. See < [http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/sophist\\_refut.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Aristotle/sophist_refut.html) >. Accessed November 20, 2019.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, John P. Rowan, trans. (Notre Dame: Dumb Ox Books, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> Gregory Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*", *The Philosophical Review* 63, no. 3 (1954), pp. 319-349.

<sup>6</sup> For example, Vlastos famously argued that the Third Man argument constituted in part Plato's "expression of his acknowledged but unresolved puzzlement". *Ibid.*, p. 344.

## I. The Third Man in Plato

The *Parmenides* may be divided into two parts. The first part, which runs roughly from 126a to 137b, consists mainly of a young Socrates conversing with Zeno and Parmenides about Socrates' theory of Forms. The second part, running from roughly 137c to 166c, contains Parmenides' attempt to demonstrate for his audience a certain type of exercise which would allow for Socrates to salvage his theory. It is this second part which has proven famously and especially difficult for readers and commentators to understand, resulting in a myriad of widely differing interpretations. However, it is the first part which interests us here, since it is this part which contains the Third Man argument. As such, we will be focusing on the first part of the *Parmenides* to the exclusion of the second.<sup>7</sup>

The Third Man argument appears as the second of five arguments that Parmenides brings against Socrates' theory of Forms. It should be noted that, as it appears here, the Third Man argument actually concerns the Form of Largeness or Greatness, and not of Man. The Third Man argument was so named after Aristotle's use of the term, who referred to such an argument in his *Metaphysics*. We will examine these shortly.

Parmenides begins the argument by probing Socrates: "I imagine that your reason for assuming one idea of each kind is as follows: - Whenever a number of objects appear to you to be great there doubtless seems to you to be one and the same idea (or nature) visible in them all; hence you conceive of greatness as one."<sup>8</sup> Socrates agrees, to which Parmenides replies:

But now, if you allow your mind in like manner to embrace in one view this real greatness and those other great things, will not one more greatness arise, being required to account for the semblance of greatness in these?... Then another idea of greatness now comes into view over and above absolute greatness and the individuals which partake of it; and then another, over and above these, by virtue of which they will all be great, and so you will be left not with a single idea in every case, but with an infinite number.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup> With apologies to Constance C. Meinwald, who argues that the Third Man and Plato's position on it can only be properly understood when read against the second part of the *Parmenides*. Constance C. Meinwald, "Goodbye to the Third Man", in Richard Kraut, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992) pp. 365-396; see especially p. 369. The scope of this paper simply does not allow me to consider the second part of the *Parmenides* in any detail. Moreover, Aristotle's mentions of the Third Man argument and Thomas's interpretation of them allow us to bypass the considerations which led Meinwald to her conclusion.

<sup>8</sup> Plato, *Parmenides*, 132a.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 132a-132b.

Immediately one may see that Parmenides' objection rests on a multiplication of Forms that Socrates would find unacceptable. As Constance C. Meinwald writes, "[this] gives rise not only to a 'Third Large,' but is supposed to be reiterated to yield an unending series of Forms; Socrates regards such a result as unacceptable."<sup>10</sup> The idea is that if a Form is invoked in order to explain what is common among sensible things (in this case, largeness or greatness), then we must for that reason invoke some additional Form which explains what is common between the sensible things and the original Form. Of course, this semblance between the additional Form and the original Form and the sensible things in question must be explained by some further Form, and so on *ad infinitum*. The result is that not only must there be some Form over-and-above, so to speak, sensible objects and the Form of said objects, but that this results in a vicious regress so that the Forms' explanatory power is reduced to nil.<sup>11</sup>

There are a few more points to note before we move on to Aristotle and Thomas. First, the issue of how to successfully defend the theory of Forms against this attack is not taken up in the *Parmenides*, or indeed in any of Plato's works. However, some scholars, such as Meinwald, will argue that a solution may be gleaned from the text of the *Parmenides* when taken as a whole,<sup>12</sup> while others who are sympathetic to Meinwald's interpretation are not in agreement as to the types of predication which Meinwald identifies during the course of her treatment of the Third Man argument, or to their applications.<sup>13</sup>

Second, the Third Man argument that appears in the *Parmenides* is woefully underspecified. According to Meinwald,

Not only does the text often not set out enough premises for the announced conclusion to follow, but there is just not enough information from which to determine exactly what we are supposed to understand as completing the arguments. And different ways of completing the arguments are not just trivially different.... The variety of formulations of the Third Man Argument that have been produced by careful interpreters is a sign of the extent to which that argument is underspecified, while the heat of their disagreement with each other indicates that the different formulations differ importantly.<sup>14</sup>

At bottom, the Third Man argument that appears in the *Parmenides* is painfully short and underdeveloped; where one might hope for an extended treatise on the subject, only a few short lines are offered. The

<sup>10</sup> Meinwald, "Good-bye to the Third Man", p. 373.

<sup>11</sup> Vlastos has made an excellent logical structuring of the argument. See Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*".

<sup>12</sup> See Meinwald, "Good-bye to the Third Man", p. 381.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Francis Jeffry Pelletier and Edward N. Zalta, "How to Say Goodbye to the Third Man", *Nous* 34, no. 2 (2000), pp. 165-202, especially pp. 165-166.

<sup>14</sup> Meinwald, "Good-bye to the Third Man", p. 371.

sheer amount of literature that has been produced on those short lines is a testament to the topic's endearing impact and to its depth as a philosophical well.<sup>15</sup>

## II. The Third Man in Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas

In all there are five instances of Aristotle referring to the Third Man argument in his body of work; these are: (1) *Sophistical Refutations* 178b36, (2) *Metaphysics* I.9, 990b17, (3) *Metaphysics* VII.13, 1039a1, (4) *Metaphysics* XI.1, 1059b8, and (5) *Metaphysics* XIII.4, 1079a13. Of these, Thomas commented on numbers 2 through 4. This, combined with the fact that the mentions in *Sophistical Refutations* and *Metaphysics* XIII are relatively minor and do not add anything substantial to our discussion here, has led me to leave mentions (1) and (5) aside for the purposes of this paper. We will focus, then, on *Metaphysics* I, VII, and XI in an attempt to understand Aristotle's Third Man argument and its intricacies. As stated above, we will rely heavily on Thomas's commentary for our interpretation.

### a.) *Metaphysics* I.9, 990b17

The opening book of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is well known for compiling a summary of the history of philosophers on the causes. Among those treated are the Platonists, who, Aristotle writes, posited the Forms as explanations of things. He continues, writing that "of the ways in which we prove that the Forms exist, none is convincing... of the more accurate arguments, some lead to Ideas of relations, of which we say there is no independent class, and others introduce the 'third man'."<sup>16</sup>

Immediately we can note the brevity of the reference; no obvious extrapolation on the Third Man argument is offered by Aristotle in the following lines of the book. What little he does tell us is limited to the origins of the Third Man: Aristotle holds that the argument arises from

<sup>15</sup> Moreover, the amount of literature and attention directed towards the Third Man argument in the *Parmenides* might give the indication that the argument constitutes the most decisive blow against Plato's theory of Forms, when in fact Plato himself indicates that this is not so – at least to his mind. Plato, *Parmenides*, 133b. That dubious distinction belongs to another argument entirely, so that the Third Man argument is perhaps over-represented in the literature – again, to Plato's mind at least. On the other hand, there is some discussion as to what exactly Plato meant by writing that the fifth argument of the first part of the *Parmenides* constituted the greatest difficulty for the theory of Forms; perhaps he only meant that it had the most disastrous consequences? See Meinwald, "Good-bye to the Third Man", p. 395, endnote 23.

<sup>16</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.9, 990b9-17.

certain “more accurate” arguments which purport to show (unconvincingly, according to Aristotle) the existence of the Forms.

When we move on to Thomas’s commentary, we find the extrapolation which we might have hoped to find in Aristotle. Writes Thomas: “The second conclusion is one which follows from other most certain arguments, namely, that there is ‘a third man.’ This phrase can be understood in three ways.”<sup>17</sup> We will devote our attention to each of Thomas’s three ways of understanding the “third man” phrase, as the analysis of these will allow us to say something substantial and, in the context of the modern commentary on the Third Man argument, new.

### i.) The First Way of Understanding the Third Man

In scholastic fashion, Thomas divides his topic into a number of different sub-topics and immediately tackles the first. Writes Thomas: “First, it can mean that the ideal man is a third man distinct from two men perceived by the senses, who have the common name man predicated of both of them. But this does not seem to be what [Aristotle] has in mind... for this is the position against which he argues. Hence according to this it would not lead to an absurdity.”<sup>18</sup> Simply put, the first way of understanding the Third Man argument is just Plato’s theory of Forms. That is, we might understand the Third Man to be the Form which explains how two sensible objects, in this case men, are related or similar: there is a “third man” or Form of man over and above them in which they participate and which accounts for what is common in them, i.e. their intelligible structure.

However, Thomas argues that this first way of understanding the argument cannot be what Aristotle means in mentioning the Third Man in book I, simply because Aristotle is here critiquing the arguments which the Platonists have put forward in order to establish the theory of Forms; it would be inappropriate and circular to claim that an argument in support of the theory of Forms is absurd because it leads to the theory of Forms. Thus, Aristotle cannot mean the “third man” to indicate this sense.

### ii.) The Second Way of Understanding the Third Man

Thomas then moves on to the second way of understanding the Third Man argument; he writes the following:

The second way in which this expression can be understood is this: the third man means one that is common to the ideal man and to one perceived by the senses. For since both a man perceived by the senses and the ideal man have a common intelligible structure, like two men perceived by the senses, then just as the ideal man is held to be a third man in addition to two men perceived by the senses, in a similar way there

<sup>17</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, Book I, Lesson 14, §214.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

should be held to be another third man in addition to the ideal man and one perceived by the senses. But neither does this seem to be what [Aristotle] has in mind here, because he leads us immediately to this absurdity by means of another argument. Hence it would be pointless to lead us to the same absurdity here.<sup>19</sup>

This articulation of the Third Man argument is immediately recognizable as being quite similar to the version which appears in the *Parmenides*. Noticeably, however, the concept of infinite regression is absent. This second way of understanding the Third Man argument proceeds by noticing that what is common to a sensible man and the Form of man must be explained by some further instance, or Form, of man. Here there is simply no need for any sort of infinite regression, since the “third man” by itself is enough of an absurdity. Certainly, Plato would have viewed a “third man” as a serious objection to his theory of Forms and would have been unhappy with multiplying causal explanations beyond what he thought was necessary, namely, beyond the positing of a single Form of “man” over and above sensible men.

This form of the Third Man argument sheds some light on Aristotle’s scathing critique of the theory of Forms which one finds in the beginning of chapter 9 of book I of the *Metaphysics*:

But as for those who posit the Ideas as causes, firstly, in seeking to grasp the causes of the things around us, they introduced others equal in number to these, as if a man who wanted to count things thought he would not be able to do it while they were few, but tried to count them when he had added to their number.<sup>20</sup>

Aristotle is not here referring to the Third Man argument as such, but rather to the theory of Forms in general. His remarks here do, however, help us to understand his point of view in critiquing the theory of Forms and his mention of the Third Man in book I of the *Metaphysics*. Clearly in the second way of understanding the Third Man argument, we have an instance – right or not – of explanations being multiplied seemingly superfluously. Where the first way of understanding the Third Man viewed the third man as the Form which explained the likeness (or, intelligible structure) that is in common between sensible men – and in this Plato would find no disagreement – this second way of understanding the Third Man posits a Form which explains the likeness (or, intelligible structure) that is common between a sensible man (or men) and the Form of man – and to this Plato would object. Thus, we need not posit an infinite regress of men, since the third man over and above sensible man and the Form of man is enough to, at the least, damage Plato’s theory of Forms. Moreover, it is noteworthy that this instance of the Third Man argument does not include a plurality

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., §215.

<sup>20</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.9, 990a34-990b4.



of sensible men; indeed, just one sensible man is referred to, and only one is needed in order to get the argument off of the ground, in contrast to the first way of understanding the argument. This will be a recurring theme as we consider more instances of the Third Man argument below.

Yet Thomas writes that this way of understanding the Third Man argument is not what Aristotle has in mind here in book I of the *Metaphysics*. Thomas's reasoning is rather interesting, and speaks to his remarkable talent as an exegete. According to Thomas, Aristotle cannot mean to refer to this way of understanding the Third Man argument because Aristotle immediately moves on to articulate this very argument; hence, Thomas reasons, Aristotle must mean by "the third man" some other argument.

Let us digress for a moment to consider Aristotle's articulation of this second way of understanding the Third Man argument and Thomas's commentary thereupon. Writes Aristotle:

And if the Ideas and the particulars that share in them have the same form, there will be something common to these; for what should '2' be one and the same in the perishable 2's or in those which are many but eternal, and not the same in the '2 itself' as in the particular 2? But if they have not the same form, they must have only the name in common, and it is as if one were to call both Callias and a wooden image a 'man', without observing any community between them.<sup>21</sup>

Again, we can see that the concept of infinite regression does not come into the argument; it is enough of a critique of Plato's theory of Forms, thinks Aristotle, that there would be "something common to these". When we turn to Thomas, we find that his commentary on these brief lines of Aristotle's to be comparatively lengthy. Nevertheless, a study of Thomas's commentary, if only in part, will help us to better understand the argument of the *Parmenides*, even if the concept of infinite regression is missing from Aristotle and Thomas.

Thomas begins by providing a summary of Aristotle's argument,<sup>22</sup> after which he provides a detailed explanation of, in Thomas's words, "[the] need for positing a one apart from both sensible substances and the Forms".<sup>23</sup> Writes Thomas:

the Ideas and the sensible things which participate in them either belong to one class or not. If they belong to one class, and it is necessary to posit, according to Plato's position, one common separate Form for all things having a common nature, then it will be necessary to posit some

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 991a2-8.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book I, Lesson 14, §221.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., §222.

entity common to both sensible things and the Ideas themselves, which exists apart from both.<sup>24</sup>

Next, Thomas considers two ways in which one might defend the theory of Forms against such an attack; and as to the first of these Thomas responds by bringing in an argument which has little direct bearing on the topic at hand, we will leave it aside.<sup>25</sup> The second counter-argument to the second way of understanding the Third Man which Thomas considers is that “sensible things, which participate in the Ideas, do not have the same form as the Ideas”.<sup>26</sup> This counter-argument is significant since, if it is successful, it would destroy the need for a “third man” completely, as there would be no “common nature” shared between sensible things and the Form thereof, and thus no need to posit some third entity which is common to these. Thomas replies in the following manner:

it follows [from this] that the name which is predicated of both the Ideas and sensible substances is predicated in a purely equivocal way. For those things are said to be equivocal which have only a common name and differ in their intelligible structure. And it follows that they are not only equivocal in every way but equivocal in an absolute sense, like those things on which one name is imposed without regard for any common attribute, which are said to be equivocal by chance; for example, if one were to call both Callias and a piece of wood man.<sup>27</sup>

In short, if the sensibles and the Form in question do not share the same form, then the name that is predicated of them in common would be used purely equivocally; yet this is unacceptable, especially for Plato.

### iii.) The Third Way of Understanding the Third Man

Thomas next considers the third way of understanding the Third Man argument, which he holds Aristotle to intend when the latter mentions “the third man” in book I of the *Metaphysics*. Writes Thomas:

Plato posited three kinds of entities in certain classes of things, namely, sensible substances, the objects of mathematics and the Forms. He does this, for example, in the case of numbers, lines and the like. But there is no reason why intermediate things should be held to exist in certain classes rather than others. Hence in the class of man it was also necessary to posit an intermediate man, who will be a third man midway between the man perceived by the senses and the ideal man.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> However, the argument is especially noteworthy for those who are interested in the Third Man as an argument that revolves around predication. See *ibid.*, §223.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., §216.

The argument that Thomas presents here is rather unique; as far as “third man” arguments go, this one articulated by Thomas is without a doubt of the least known. It begins by noting that in the class of numbers, lines, and the like, Plato had posited sensibles, Forms, and intermediaries between these two.<sup>29</sup> But, Thomas argues, there is no reason not to posit intermediaries in other classes of things as well, and as such we are just as justified in positing an intermediate “man” in between a sensible man and the Form of man.

Once again, the reader will notice that the concept of infinite regression is absent. And once again, we might imagine Aristotle’s critique of the theory of Forms from *Metaphysics* I.9, 990a34-990b4 as shedding some light onto our understanding of the Third Man argument: in seeking to explain the common intelligible structure of sensible objects, causes are multiplied beyond necessity. Notably, the exact manner in which the “third man” is supposed to arise is different here than it is in the second way of understanding the argument and in the *Parmenides*. Here, the “third man” appears as an intermediary, whereas in our previous examinations we saw that it appears as a necessary explanation of sorts, being “over and above” the sensibles and the Form, so to speak. Likewise, one might do away with this third version of the Third Man argument entirely by rejecting Plato’s doctrine of the objects of mathematics being intermediaries, while the other versions of the Third Man argument that we have seen are entirely neutral to said objects.

It is worth asking: Does this version of the Third Man argument allow for an infinite regress in the similar way that the second version might? That is, might we posit a “fourth man” that is intermediate between the sensible man and the “third man”, and a “fifth man” that is intermediate between the “third man” and the Form of man, and so on *ad infinitum*? I am not convinced that this way of formulating the Third Man argument works. The third way of understanding the Third Man argument that Thomas is working with, and that he thinks Aristotle is working with, is based upon the Platonic idea of the objects of mathematics being intermediaries in certain classes of things, and Plato did not posit infinite intermediaries in these classes. Hence, if Aristotle and Thomas are to base the Third Man argument specifically on the line of reasoning that Plato uses in certain classes of things – lines, numbers, and the like – and carrying it over to other classes of things – man, horse, and whatever else has a Form – then we would not be justified in positing an infinite regress in this “fourth” way of understanding the Third Man argument, since neither did Plato posit an infinite regress in his doctrine of intermediaries.

<sup>29</sup> Thomas is reading this Platonic doctrine out of *The Republic*’s divided line analogy in book VI. See Plato, *The Republic*, Allan Bloom, trans. (New York: Basic Books, 1991). See also F. M. Cornford, “Mathematics and Dialectic in the *Republic* VI.-VII. (I.)”, *Mind* 41, no. 161 (1932), pp. 37-52.

b.) *Metaphysics VII.13, 1039a1*

We move on now to the second instance of the Third Man argument in the *Metaphysics*. For context, during the seventh book of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle attempts to show that “no universal attribute is a substance, and this is plain also from the fact that no common predicate indicates a ‘this’, but rather a ‘such’.”<sup>30</sup> He continues, arguing that if we deny this, “many difficulties follow and especially the ‘third man’.”<sup>31</sup> No explanation is offered by Aristotle.

Thomas’s commentary is curious: “[Aristotle] says that, if the preceding conclusion is not admitted, many absurdities will follow, and one of these will be the need to posit a third man. This can be explained in two ways.”<sup>32</sup> Immediately we may ask: Why are there not three ways of understanding Aristotle’s use of the phrase “third man”, as there were three in book I of the *Metaphysics*? Thomas continues: “First, it can mean that besides the two singular men, Socrates and Plato, there is a third man, who is common to both. This is not absurd according to those who posit Ideas, although it seems absurd from the viewpoint of right reason.”<sup>33</sup> The reader will recognize this as the first way of understanding the Third Man argument from book I of the *Metaphysics*. This explanation is simply Plato’s theory of Forms, hence the reason why Thomas writes that this explanation of the Third Man “is not absurd according to those who posit Ideas”, since it just is a very simple version of the theory of Forms. Moving on, Thomas considers a second explanation of “the third man”:

Second, it can be explained as meaning that there is posited a third man besides a singular man and man in common, since they have a common name and intelligible expression, just as do two singular men in addition to whom a third common man is posited; and the reason is that they have a common name and definition.<sup>34</sup>

It is clear that this explanation is the second way of understanding the Third Man argument from book I of the *Metaphysics*, and here Thomas is just as explicit with drawing out the argument; if we accept Plato’s theory of Forms, then in the same way that there must be posited a third man in common between two sensible men, so there must also be posited a third man in addition to a single sensible man and man in common. Again, the reason is that what motivates us to posit a third man in the first case – a common name and intelligible expression or

<sup>30</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics* VII.13, 1038b35.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 1039a1.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, Book VII, Lesson 13, §1586.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., §1587.

structure among the entities in question – is exactly the same thing that motivates us in the second case to posit a third man. And again, where Plato in the first case would be in agreement with the conclusion of the chain of reasoning, in the second case he would reject the conclusion (regardless of any “lack” of an infinite regress).

This is all well and fine, yet it is not obvious why Thomas neglects to mention the third way of understanding the Third Man argument here. We have seen the first two ways represented, yet here after considering the second argument, Thomas moves on to continue his commentary on Aristotle. What might explain this? I believe that the answer lies in the context of the various passages in question. Recall that in book I of the *Metaphysics* Aristotle mentions “the third man” in reference to “the more accurate arguments” which purported to show the reality of the Forms, specifically asserting that some of these “more accurate arguments” introduce “the third man”.<sup>35</sup> Thus, Thomas’s commentary on this excerpt of Aristotle’s was required to be rather broad in character. Moreover, as we saw above, Thomas held that the book I mention of the Third Man argument did not refer to what we’ve called the second way of understanding the argument that reappears here in book VII of the *Metaphysics*. In contrast, this book VII mention of the Third Man is in a much more specific context; Aristotle is articulating the consequences of denying a specific proposition: the proposition that “no universal attribute is a substance”.<sup>36</sup> If we see Thomas’s commentary as informed by this proposition, it becomes easier to see why Thomas included the first two ways of understanding the Third Man argument in his commentary and not the third. The first two have direct bearing on the denial of the proposition that no universal attribute is a substance, since to deny this would be to claim that there is a universal attribute which is a substance, at which point the first two ways of understanding the Third Man would apply, according to Aristotle and Thomas, since this universal attribute would both have an intelligible structure (being a substance) and share this structure in common with other entities (being a universal). On the other hand, the assertion of the claim that there is a universal attribute that is a substance (no matter how many) does not imply or exclude the reality of the objects of mathematics as intermediaries between sensible substances and Forms. Indeed, it would be absurd for Thomas to bring in intermediaries in connection with the denial of the proposition “no universal attribute is a substance”, since intermediaries have no bearing on the question at hand – unlike in book I of the *Metaphysics*, where the discussion is much more broad, and where Thomas is clear that the first two ways of understanding the Third Man

<sup>35</sup> See Aristotle, *Metaphysics* I.9, 990b15-17.

<sup>36</sup> See *ibid.*, VII.13, 1038b35. Notice also that Aristotle writes that the Third Man argument follows “especially” from denying this proposition.

argument cannot be what Aristotle means in mentioning it there. It is consistent, then, for Thomas to refer to the third way of understanding the Third Man in book I of the *Metaphysics* and not here in book VII.

c.) *Metaphysics XI.1, 1059b8*

Aristotle's final mention of the Third Man that we will examine is in book XI of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle writes:

evidently the Forms do not exist. [But] it is hard to say, even if one suppose them to exist, why in the world the same is not true of the others things of which there are Forms, as the objects of mathematics. I mean that these thinkers place the objects of mathematics between the Forms and perceptible things, as a kind of third set of things apart both from the Forms and from the things in this world; but there is not a third man or horse besides the ideal and the individuals.<sup>37</sup>

Here Aristotle is explicit with his articulation of the Third Man argument. While it may be suggested that Aristotle never extrapolated on the Third Man argument, instead only mentioning it offhand, and that one might thereby equate Aristotle's view of the Third Man with the argument that appears in the *Parmenides*, this brief passage from the *Metaphysics* suggests otherwise.

The argument which Aristotle presents here is nuanced. It begins by assuming that the Forms exist. From here, Aristotle asks why, from the assumed premise, the same thing would not be true of things as is true of the objects of mathematics. He then explains his reasoning further, explicitly stating that, in the case of the objects of mathematics, the Platonists place these “as a kind of third set of things” between sensibles and the Forms. Aristotle then states the Platonic position: There is no third man besides the Form of man; yet it would appear that we are justified in assuming that there is. The reasoning, we have seen already, is that there is no reason why one ought to posit intermediaries in one class of things and not in another, and so we must also posit (or at least, we are just as justified in positing) intermediaries in the class of man, horse, etc. What we have here is clearly and explicitly an instance of Aristotle articulating a full version of the Third Man argument.

It is plain to see why Thomas thought to interpret a third way of understanding the Third Man in book I of the *Metaphysics*. Indeed, during his commentary there he refers forward to this argument.<sup>38</sup> His commentary here on book XI is not brief, but it is worth quoting at length:

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., XI.1, 1059a2-9.

<sup>38</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's Metaphysics*, Book I, Lesson 14, §216.

since [Aristotle] had said that there are evidently no separate Forms, he poses the question whether the objects of mathematics are separate. First, he shows that they are not. For if one claims that there are separate Forms and separate mathematical entities over and above sensible substances, why is not the same thing true of all things which have Forms as is true of the objects of mathematics? So that just as the objects of mathematics are assumed to be intermediate between the separate Forms and sensible substances as a third class of things over and above the separate Forms and the singular things which exist here (for example, a mathematical line over and above the Form of a line and the perceptible line), in a similar fashion there should be a third man and third ‘horse over and above man-in-himself and horse-in-itself’ (i.e., the ideal man and the ideal horse, which the Platonists called Ideas) and individual men and horses. But the Platonists did not posit intermediates in such cases as these but only in that of the objects of mathematics.<sup>39</sup>

Thomas ties this version of the Third Man argument to the question of the separation of the Forms as well as to the separation of the objects of mathematics. The Third Man argument, to Thomas’s mind, is not just the result of the Platonists positing the Forms, but also of their positing the separation of the objects of mathematics as intermediaries. The Third Man argument, as Thomas interprets Aristotle in presenting it here in book XI of the *Metaphysics* (as well as in book I), is quite different from the argument which appears in the *Parmenides*. That is not to say that Plato’s own “Third Man” argument in the *Parmenides* is completely unrelated to what we now call the “Third Man”; Thomas’s commentary on book I of the *Metaphysics* is enough to show us that among the many ways to interpret the Third Man, the version of the *Parmenides* (with or without the infinite regress) is not without merit – and I am leaving aside the question of the soundness of any Third Man argument. It is interesting to note, however, that nowhere in the text of the *Metaphysics*, or indeed in Thomas’s commentary thereon, does the concept of infinite regression arise with connection to the Third Man argument.

### III. Modern Interpretations

I now wish to consider other commentators on Plato, Aristotle, and the Third Man argument. Unfortunately, I have been unable to locate any English secondary literature on Thomas’s interpretation of the Third Man. The state of the current literature on the argument, at least as far as Plato and Aristotle are concerned, is overwhelming in its sheer volume, yet, I would argue, significantly less overwhelming with respect to its depth. Among this literature the common theme is that Aristotle’s

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., Book XI, Lesson 1, §2160.



Third Man argument is at the least very similar to that which appears in the *Parmenides*, and that in order to answer the Third Man argument, one must delve into the philosophical depths of the Platonic and Aristotelean theories of predication.

For example, Joan Kung indicates that “there is little doubt that Aristotle would regard the regress engendered by the [Third Man argument] as unacceptable.”<sup>40</sup> Indeed. Yet, the reader will notice, Aristotle nowhere mentions infinite regression when discussing the Third Man argument, neither in the texts we have considered in this paper, nor in the texts which we have acknowledged and bypassed. And while it might be protested that Aristotle only gives brief mentions of the Third Man, the fact remains that the one time he does present an explicit version of the Third Man argument, infinite regression entirely absent. Moreover, Kung consistently gives the impression that Aristotle’s attack against the theory of Forms in the Third Man argument is one which is based upon predication.<sup>41</sup> Now, this might be true of what I have called the second way of understanding the Third Man argument, but it is not clear that the third way of understanding the argument is so based; at the very least argumentation is required in order to show this.

Kung is not alone in her thinking; it is representational of the current state of scholarship on Aristotle and the Third Man argument. One sees this explicitly in Gail Fine, who writes that Aristotle’s Third Man argument “purports to show that a theory of forms is vulnerable to a vicious infinite regress... the [Third Man argument] purports to show that, if there is one form corresponding to ‘F’, there are an infinite number of them.”<sup>42</sup> Interestingly, Fine also mentions the passage from *Metaphysics* VII, during which, of course, there is no mention of infinite regress, and she neglects to mention the passage from *Metaphysics* XI, the only passage of Aristotle’s where he explicitly gives his version of the Third Man argument, and which, again, has no mention of an infinite regress. Indeed, nowhere in her paper discussing Aristotle and the Third Man argument does she mention *Metaphysics* XI or the objects of mathematics as intermediaries.

Likewise, the tendency to view Aristotle’s version of the Third Man argument as what I have called the second way of understanding it is extremely strong in the secondary literature post-Vlastos. Robert Barford, in his treatment of Aristotle and the Third Man, cannot help but

<sup>40</sup> Joan Kung, “Aristotle on Theses, Suches and the Third Man Argument”, *Phronesis* 26, no. 3 (1981), pp. 207-247, 225.

<sup>41</sup> See especially *ibid.*, p. 227.

<sup>42</sup> Gail Fine, “Owen, Aristotle, and the Third Man”, *Phronesis* 27, no. 1 (1982), p. 14. Later in her paper, Fine argues that “Aristotle sets it [the Third Man argument] out in his *Peri Ideōn*”. *Ibid.*, endnote 5 (page 28). I have not included the *Peri Ideōn* in this paper, since its authenticity is still under dispute, and since it survives only in fragments throughout Alexander of Aphrodisias’s commentary on the *Metaphysics*.



assume this,<sup>43</sup> while other scholars, such as Meinwald<sup>44</sup> and James C. Dybikowski,<sup>45</sup> heavily imply this by treating Aristotle's critique as one that is fundamentally about predication.

This is not to say that no Aristotelean version of the Third Man argument revolves around the issue of predication; we have seen that the second way of understanding the argument does just this. The issue is with scholars ignoring – in most cases, completely ignoring – the only instance in Aristotle's texts of him actually explicitly stating the argument, and the fact that this explicit statement of the argument revolves around the inconsistent use of intermediates in Plato's ontology and not around predication (in any obvious sense, at least).

However, I have come across one scholar who has come quite close to noticing just this, that scholar being Vlastos, who began the modern flood of literature on the Third Man; unfortunately, those who have written after him have missed this aspect of Vlastos' article, and the point appears to never have been taken up. Vlastos discerns two separate versions of the Third Man argument in the *Parmenides*, adding that Aristotle supplied a third.<sup>46</sup> And where at first Vlastos indicates that he is taking this third Aristotelean version of the argument from *Peri Ideōn*,<sup>47</sup> later in the same paper he indicates that he is aware of the argument of *Metaphysics* XI,<sup>48</sup> although this remark is only offhand and does not derail the discussion of predication. The result is that Vlastos has come frustratingly close to touching on the Aristotelean Third Man argument (and what would be, in his eyes, a fourth version of the argument), only to abruptly change direction and avoid it altogether.

What explains this phenomenon? What explains the seemingly willful ignorance of modern scholars of the Aristotelean explanation of the Third Man argument? When it comes to Aristotle, why do so many scholars prefer to satisfy themselves with "third man" name drops and a text of disputed authenticity, especially when an explicit Aristotelean explanation of the Third Man exists? Perhaps part of this may be explained by the fact that the Platonic doctrine of intermediaries in the objects of mathematics remains itself so vague and disputed. Regardless,

<sup>43</sup> Robert Barford, "The Context of the Third Man Argument in Plato's *Parmenides*", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 16, no. 1 (1978), pp. 1-11.

<sup>44</sup> Meinwald, "Good-bye to the Third Man". In addition, Meinwald claims that "Aristotle popularized the Third Man as a crucial problem for Platonism." *Ibid.*, p. 373. While this may be true, it is an open question as to whether or not Aristotle popularized the version of the Third Man that Meinwald has in mind. It seems to me that Plato did the popularizing of the Parmenidean style of argument, and that Aristotle was, unfortunately, shoehorned into this type of thinking by subsequent commentators.

<sup>45</sup> James C. Dybikowski, "Professor Owen, Aristotle, and the Third Man Argument", *Mind* 81, no. 323 (1972), pp. 445-447.

<sup>46</sup> Vlastos, "The Third Man Argument in the *Parmenides*", p. 329.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 15.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 339, footnote 36.

we have a steady guide in Thomas, and if we are to take Thomas's commentary on Aristotle seriously, we may discern three important points in closing out this paper. First, the third way of understanding the Third Man argument is the quintessential Aristotelean Third Man argument, as evidenced by books I and XI of the *Metaphysics*. Second, the second way of understanding the Third Man argument is another legitimate interpretation of the argument, although it is most properly understood as arising out of a specific set of premises surrounding the theory of Forms, as evidenced by book VII of the *Metaphysics*. Third and finally, none of the three ways of understanding the Third Man argument involve an infinite regress (at least for Aristotle; Plato is another story), and neither does the third version revolve around the concept of predication – at least not to the degree which the second version does. For bringing these points to light, Thomas's commentary is invaluable.

### Conclusion

The preceding considerations have led me to conclude that the Third Man arguments that one finds in the *Parmenides* and in Aristotle ought to be interpreted as separate arguments. The modern tendency to equate them is unfortunate, since in the case of Aristotle's mentions of a "third man", there is either little on the surface to suggest that they are either the same or different arguments as the *Parmenides* argument, or there is much to suggest that the arguments are fundamentally different, as is the case with the *Metaphysics* book XI argument. If the conclusion that the *Parmenides* and the Aristotelean Third Man arguments ought to be interpreted as separate arguments is correct, then it raises the question: What led Plato and Aristotle to critique the theory of Forms in such different ways? Why was Plato so concerned with infinite regress? Why was Aristotle not? Certainly, these questions, insofar as they touch upon Plato, are intimately tied up with the very difficult to interpret *Parmenides*. Yet perhaps we may find some answers to these questions in Plato's and Aristotle's respective philosophical projects and methodologies. In any event, it has been my primary intention in this paper to indicate a shift in "Third Man studies" that must occur in modern scholarship.

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# THE PRIORITY OF THE SOUL AS ACTUALITY IN ARISTOTLE'S *DE ANIMA*

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## I

**F**OR ARISTOTLE, THE SOUL IS the substantial form (*ousia*) and essence (*to ti ên einai*) of the living body.<sup>1</sup> In *De anima* 2.1, he gives a general account of the soul as “first actuality (*entelecheia hê prôtê*) of a natural organic body.”<sup>2</sup> Key to this account is the distinction between two kinds of actualities, one of which is prior in generation (*protera têi genesei*) to the other. Aristotle illustrates this distinction with the example of knowledge: In the same person, to have knowledge is prior to exercising it. The first kind of actuality is analogous to being asleep, while the other is analogous to being awake.<sup>3</sup> From now on I will consistently refer to the first kind of actuality as “actuality” and to the other kind as “activity.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412b10–11 and 412a6–9.

<sup>2</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412b5–6.

<sup>3</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412a9–11.22–28. See also *De anima* 2.5.417b21, where Aristotle illustrates the distinction between two kinds of potentiality (*dunamis*) using the example of the knower. He explains that we call someone “a knower” in three different ways: (1) the one who is capable of learning but has not yet acquired the knowledge; (2) the one who has already acquired knowledge but is not currently using it; and (3) the one who is currently exercising the knowledge he has. The last two correspond to the two kinds of actuality distinguished by Aristotle in *De anima* 2.1.

<sup>4</sup> It is not possible to give a fully satisfactory translation of Aristotle's terms *entelecheia* and *energeia* into English, partly because it is already difficult to articulate the distinction between these two terms in his works. By rendering “(first) *entelecheia*” as “actuality,” I do not mean to say that actuality cannot also be regarded as an *energeia* (that is, activity) in the way Aristotle describes *energeia* in *Metaphysics* 9. For more details on this complex topic, see: George A. Blair, “The Meaning of ‘*Energeia*’ and ‘*Entelecheia*’ in Aristotle,” *International Philosophical Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (March 1967): 101–17; Stephen Menn, “The Origins of Aristotle's concept of Ἐνέργεια: Ἐνέργεια and Δύναμις,” *Ancient Philosophy* 14, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 73–114; Jonathan Beere, *Doing and Being: An Interpretation of Aristotle's Metaphysics Theta* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Thomas K. Johansen, “Capacity and

Commentators have already noted some problems with this account of the soul.<sup>5</sup> To my knowledge, however, no direct attention has been paid to the insufficiency of the notion of actuality, just by itself, to articulate the priority of the soul as the substance of the living body. Indeed, “priority in generation” seems to fall short of the priority of the soul in substance (*têi ousiai*). Moreover, in *Metaphysics* 9.8, Aristotle argues that things that are prior in substance and form are posterior in generation.<sup>6</sup> Accordingly, to say simply that the soul is an actuality only seems to convey a temporal sense of priority that falls short of the substantial priority of the soul as the essence and form of the body, thus compromising Aristotle’s commitment to hylomorphism.

Further, proponents of the view of the soul as a harmony, which reduces the soul to an accidental quality of the body, may well use the notion of actuality to refer to this harmony: The harmony or attunement of a lyre is the actuality that is prior in generation to the activity of actually playing the lyre. And how can a quality be the formal cause of

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Potentiality: Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* Θ.6–7 from the Perspective of the *De Anima*,” *Topoi* 31, no. 2 (October 2012): 209–20; and Aryeh Kosman, *The Activity of Being: An Essay on Aristotle’s Ontology* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Ackrill, for example, has famously argued that such a definition creates problems for Aristotle’s doctrine of hylomorphism. John L. Ackrill, “Aristotle’s Definitions of ‘*Psuchê*,’” *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, new series 73, no. 1 (1972–73): 119–33. Bolton has explained how the definitions of the soul given by Aristotle in *De anima* 2.1 are simply nominal definitions. He argues that the real definition, displaying the soul as cause, is given by Aristotle in *De anima* 2.2. Robert Bolton, “Aristotle’s Definitions of the Soul: *De anima* II, 1–3,” *Phronesis* 23, no. 3 (January 1978): 258–78. Menn argues that Aristotle does not use this definition to reject dualism but, rather, to explain how the soul (as the art, not as the artisan) can move the body (its instrument) without being itself moved. Stephen Menn, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul and the Programme of the *De anima*,” *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy* 22 (Summer 2002): 83–139. Whiting, for her part, has helped to clarify what is meant by a body being “potentially alive,” thus addressing the problem raised by Ackrill. Jennifer Whiting, “Living Bodies,” in *Essays on Aristotle’s De Anima*, ed. Martha C. Nussbaum and Amelie O. Rorty (New York: Oxford University, 1992), 88–91.

<sup>6</sup> In *Metaphysics* 9 Aristotle argues that substance is ultimately activity (*energeia*), which enjoys priority not only in account (*tôî logôi*) but in form and substance (*têi ousiai*) as well. And he describes the priority in substance precisely as moving in the opposite direction to the priority in generation (*têi genesei*): Things that are last in generation are prior in substance, because the end (*telos*) is the principle, and the activity (*energeia*) is the end. See *Metaphysics* 9.8.1050a4–10.

the living body and its efficient cause?<sup>7</sup> Health, knowledge, and other qualities of the body are actualities as well, prior in generation to their respective activities (for example, actually thinking); and yet they are not the substance of the living body. How is, then, the soul as actuality prior to all these other actualities?<sup>8</sup>

Aristotle does say, at the beginning of *De anima* 2.1, that the soul is substance (*ousia*) as form. He then says that substance is an actuality. In this way, he forestalls any account of the soul as an accidental quality of the body. As he says in the context of rejecting the view of the soul as the harmony of the body, "it is more fitting to associate harmony with health, and in general with the virtues of the body, than with the soul."<sup>9</sup> He thus implies that the soul is a substance and not an accident of the body. The problem I am concerned with is that the notion of actuality, just by itself, seems to fall short of establishing the (substantial) priority enjoyed by the soul and thus to leave a blind spot for an account of the soul as the harmony of the body. What is at stake, then, is not whether Aristotle is able to defend the substantial priority of the soul (which he does with the notions of substance and essence) but, rather, whether we can still use the notion of actuality for that purpose or must give it up altogether.

We cannot dispense with the notion of actuality because Aristotle himself did not give it up, and for good reasons.<sup>10</sup> Although his account

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<sup>7</sup> This is the crux of Aristotle's rejection of the ancient account of the soul as a harmony of the body. See *De anima* 1.4.407b27–408a30 (see also Plato, *Phaedo* 88c). In this view, the soul is a form and accident of the body, the actual proportion (*logos*) resulting from the disposition and arrangement of the multiple elements and qualities of the body. Now, a cause must be prior to its effects. If the soul were a harmony, then the soul would be an effect, posterior to the living body and its components. For more details on the view of the soul as a harmony see Hans B. Gottschalk, "Soul as Harmonia," *Phronesis* 16, no. 2 (January 1971): 179–98.

<sup>8</sup> Actuality as such is prior to potentiality. For this reason, Aristotle presumably does not need to argue that the soul is prior to the body.

<sup>9</sup> *De anima* 1.4.408a1–3. Playfully, Aristotle says that "it is more fitting [*harmonozei*] to associate harmony [*harmonian*] with health, and in general with the virtues of the body, than with the soul. This is more apparent if one would try to assign the affections and functions of the soul to some harmony [*harmonia*]; for it is difficult to make them fit [*epharmozein*]." *De anima* 1.4.408a1–5.

<sup>10</sup> I will come back to this point in the last section.

of the soul in *De anima* 2.1 is given in general terms and in outline<sup>11</sup> and he starts afresh in chapter 2,<sup>12</sup> his use of the notion of actuality cannot be considered merely dialectical. In fact, he carefully elaborates, through various steps, his account of soul as actuality in chapter 1; and, later on, he continues to refer to the soul as actuality in chapters 2 and 4.<sup>13</sup> Thus, we have no indication that Aristotle has abandoned, much less rejected, such an account of the soul as actuality. The only way out of this dilemma is to find a way to articulate the priority of the soul as actuality over the other actualities of the living body. But this is not given in the famous account of the soul in *De anima* 2.1, which only alludes to a temporal priority of actuality.

In this article I will show that there is a passage in *De anima*, namely 2.2.414a4–19, where Aristotle draws a contrast between the soul as form and actuality and other actualities of the body (knowledge and health) precisely in terms of causal (and not just a temporal) priority. This contrast between two actualities in terms of causal priority, and its import for a correct understanding of the soul as actuality, have been overlooked in the standard reading of the passage.

The article is divided into five sections. I will first present the whole passage in its context, commenting on its complexities and discussing its standard interpretation (section 2). Next, I will focus on the part of the passage where Aristotle contrasts the soul with knowledge and health, which is the portion of the passage that is central to our purposes (section 3). I will then explain in which sense the soul, as actuality, is causally prior (section 4). Finally, as a corollary, I will briefly consider how the priority of the soul as actuality of the body relates to its powers and to its activity (section 5).

## II

The passage that is central to our purposes is located toward the end of chapter 2 of book 1, at 414a4–19. At the end of this chapter, Aristotle reiterates that the soul is an actuality (*entelecheia*) of the

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<sup>11</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412b10 and 413a9.

<sup>12</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.413a12.

<sup>13</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a18 and 2.4.415b14–15.

body.<sup>14</sup> Between our passage and this conclusion there are just a few lines where Aristotle explains that the soul is neither a body nor without a body of a particular kind.<sup>15</sup> Thus, despite the fresh start of *De anima* 2.2, Aristotle has neither abandoned nor rejected the view of the soul as actuality of the body that he sketched in the previous chapter. What then is this fresh start about if Aristotle continues to use the notion of actuality?

At the beginning of *De anima* 2.2, recalling the distinction between knowing the fact and knowing the cause, Aristotle implies that in *De anima* 2.1 he has just stated the conclusion without giving the cause.<sup>16</sup> He distinguishes bodies that are ensouled from bodies that are not ensouled.<sup>17</sup> This approach contrasts with the one adopted at the beginning of 2.1, where he starts by distinguishing bodies that have life from bodies that do not have life.<sup>18</sup> The change of approach from “having life” to “being-ensouled” (that is, having soul) is telling. As Aristotle himself has announced, 2.2 represents a fresh start. He has already given us the key: the distinction between knowing the fact (*to hoti*, in this case the phenomenon of the living body) and knowing the cause (*hê aitia*, in this case the soul). The phenomenon of life is the fact that sufficiently distinguishes the two types of body without the need to appeal explicitly to a cause: Some bodies have life; others do not have life. Now, in 2.2, by referring to these two different bodies respectively as ensouled and as soulless, Aristotle is already pointing to the cause of the fact: Some bodies have life because (*gar*) they are ensouled (empowered); and they are ensouled because they have a principle in themselves (namely, the soul). By contrast, other bodies do not have life because they do not have such powers in themselves (ultimately, because they are soulless).<sup>19</sup>

The activities and the powers of life can be used to identify the living body (versus the one that is not alive) and to define its kind (plant, animal, human being); but neither the activities nor the powers explain

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<sup>14</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a27–28.

<sup>15</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a19–27.

<sup>16</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.413a11–20.

<sup>17</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.413a20.

<sup>18</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412a11–16.

<sup>19</sup> This change of approach may explain why in 2.1 Aristotle does not ever use the word “ensouled” (*empsychon*) and only once uses the expression “(the body) has soul” (see 412b25–26), while he does use several times the expression “(the body) has life” or “participates in life.” See 412a13, 15, 17, 28.

why the body is alive and why it has those specific powers. It is, rather, the soul that is the fundamental principle and cause of the living body, including both its powers and its activities.

Chapter 2 starts by promising to present the soul as cause of the living body, and it concludes with the claim that the soul is an actuality. In this causal context, we find the passage that is central to our purposes. I will first quote the passage in full, divided into three parts, and note some of its complexities. I will then present and discuss the standard interpretation of this passage. Aristotle says:

[Part I] Since [ἐπεὶ] that whereby we live and perceive [ὧ ζῶμεν καὶ αἰσθανόμεθα] is said in two ways, as that whereby we know [ὧ ἐπιστάμεθα]—we call one knowledge [τὸ μὲν ἐπιστήμην], the other soul [τὸ δὲ ψυχὴν]; (for we say that we know in virtue of both [ἐκατέρω ἐπίστασθαι])—; and, similarly, as that whereby we are healthy [ὧ ὑγιαίνομεν] in one sense is health [τὸ μὲν ὑγίεια] and in another [τὸ δὲ] some part of the body or the whole;

[Part II] And, of these, knowledge and health [τούτων δ' ἡ μὲν ἐπιστήμη τε καὶ ὑγίεια] are shape [μορφή], some sort of form [εἶδος τι] and logos and as it were an activity [οἷον ἐνέργεια] of the recipient (the former of that which is able to know, the latter of that which is able to be healthy; for it seems that the activity [ἐνέργεια] of the things that are capable of acting upon is in that which is passive and disposed); while the soul, on the other hand [ἡ ψυχὴ δέ], is that whereby we primarily live and perceive and think [ὧ ζῶμεν καὶ αἰσθανόμεθα καὶ διανοούμεθα πρῶτως].

[Part III] then [ὥστε] the soul would be some sort of logos and form [εἶδος] rather than matter and what underlies. For substance being said in three ways, as we have said, that is, form, matter, and the composite; and, of these, matter being potentiality, and form actuality [ἐντελέχεια]; since the composite is ensouled, the body is not the actuality of the soul, but rather the *soul* is the actuality of some body.<sup>20</sup>

Aristotle's main purpose in the passage is clear: He wants to argue that the soul (*psuchē*) is a form (*eidos*) and actuality (*entelecheia*), rather than matter or what underlies. This purpose is also clear from the closing sentence of the chapter a few lines below: The soul is an

<sup>20</sup> *De anima* 2.2.414a4–19. Emphasis added. For the Greek text, I follow Paulus Siwek, *Aristotelis Tractatus De anima, Graece et Latine* (Rome: Desclée, 1965). All English translations are my own.



actuality of the body.<sup>21</sup> Aristotle uses the examples of knowledge (*epistêmê*) and health (*hugieia*) for his argument about the soul.

I want to highlight how Aristotle is approaching the soul as a cause, in keeping with the causal approach set forth at the beginning of the chapter.<sup>22</sup> Aristotle uses the causal dative: “[T]he soul is that *whereby* [*hōi*] we primarily live, perceive, and think.”<sup>23</sup> What sort of causality is at stake here will be addressed later.

The passage raises some interpretative questions.<sup>24</sup> First, it is puzzling that after describing the soul in *De anima* 2.1 as an actuality like knowledge, Aristotle is now in *De anima* 2.2 contrasting the soul with knowledge. Owens notes this problem,<sup>25</sup> explaining that knowledge is being described differently in each chapter: as a potentiality for thinking in 2.1 and as the activity of the recipient in 2.2.<sup>26</sup> Second, in Part I, the soul is described as matter, when the main purpose of the passage is to argue that the soul is a form and actuality. Some commentators explain that the soul is here described as the recipient (*to dektikon*) of knowledge, a recipient that need not be understood materially.<sup>27</sup> Finally, Aristotle’s use of the word “activity” (*energeia*) in

<sup>21</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a27–28.

<sup>22</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.413a11.

<sup>23</sup> *De anima* 2.2.414a12–13. For similar uses of the dative to describe the causality of soul, see *De anima* 1.4.408b15 and 1.4.429a10–11.

<sup>24</sup> There are some textual complexities as well. The main one is to determine where the apodosis corresponding to the conjunction “since” (*epei*) in Part I starts. I think, following Hicks, that the apodosis starts with the conjunction “then” (*hōste*) in Part III. I have highlighted both conjunctions in the passage. Other minor textual problems include a few emendations to the text proposed by Bonitz and Bywater. For details, see Robert D. Hicks, *Aristotle’s De Anima* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1907), 327–30; and William D. Ross, *Aristotle: De Anima* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 218–20.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Owens, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul,” in *Philomathes: Studies and Essays in the Humanities in Memory of Philip Merlan*, ed. Robert B. Plamer and Robert Hamerton-Kelly (The Hague: Springer, 1971), 140.

<sup>26</sup> See Owens, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul,” 138. See also *ibid.*, 136–37.

<sup>27</sup> See John Philoponus, *On Aristotle On the Soul 2.1–6*, trans. William Charlton (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2005), 46. He qualifies that the soul is “as it were matter.” Ross says that the soul is a “quasi-ὑλη or δεκτικόν” and not a “literal ὑλη.” Ross, *Aristotle*, 220. Polansky notes the problem as well, focusing on the relation of the soul to its powers: “The dispositional qualities, such as life, perception, knowledge, are somehow *in* the soul, but their actualities or operations are not similarly in the soul. Were these operations merely in the soul, rather than in the composite living being (408b12–15), soul

Part II to refer to knowledge (*epistêmê*) is not what we might expect in the *De anima*. As he explains in *De anima* 2.1, knowledge is an actuality (having, *entelecheia*) rather than an activity (exercising, *energein*);<sup>28</sup> by contrast, in our passage, he is referring to knowledge (*epistêmê*) as “an activity (*energeia*) of the recipient.” I will come back to this puzzling use of the word “activity” later, since it does not concern the general interpretation of the passage.

Having addressed its main complexities, I will now present the standard interpretation of the passage. Aristotle concludes that the soul is a form and actuality of the body. He arrives at this conclusion by applying the general principle that for every activity (for example, to perceive, to think) we have two causes, the matter and the form.<sup>29</sup> He illustrates this principle with knowledge and health. One implicit premise in the argument is that form is causally prior to matter. Since the soul is that whereby we primarily live, perceive, and think, the soul is form and actuality rather than matter. We can outline the standard interpretation as follows:

*General principle.* That in virtue of which we exercise an activity is twofold: One cause is the matter, and the other is the form (implicit premise: The primary cause is the form).

*Application to living activities.* The soul is that in virtue of which we primarily live, perceive, and think; therefore, the soul is a form, rather than matter. The form is an actuality; therefore, the soul is actuality.

Most commentators follow, more or less explicitly, this interpretation.<sup>30</sup> I think that this is a correct interpretation of the passage as a whole. But I also think that such a reading overlooks the

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would be the substratum of its powers and these powers might be quite separate.” Ronald Polansky, *Aristotle's De Anima* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 185. He argues that the powers are in the soul as formal parts rather than as separate parts; the soul is not the material substratum of the powers of the soul but a logos of form with these as formal parts. *Ibid.*, 185.

<sup>28</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412a9–11.22–28.

<sup>29</sup> This principle is general for natural substances, composites of matter and form. It does not apply to immaterial beings, which lack matter.

<sup>30</sup> See, for example, Philoponus, *On Aristotle*, 46–48; Simplicius, *On Aristotle On the Soul 1.1–2.4*, trans. J. O. Urmson (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 139–40; Thomas Aquinas, *Commentary on Aristotle's De anima*, trans. Kenelm Foster and Silvester Humphries (Notre Dame, Ind.: Dumb Ox Books, 1994), 88–89; Hicks, *Aristotle's De Anima*, 327–29; and Christopher Shields, *Aristotle: De anima* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 188–89.

distinctiveness of the contrast between the soul and knowledge/health in Part II as a contrast between two actualities, one of which is prior to the other. The adverb primarily (*prôtôs*) at 414a13 is signaling the priority of one actuality (that is, the soul) over another actuality (for example, knowledge), and not the general priority of form over matter. It is precisely this contrast that discloses the causal priority of the soul as actuality over other actualities, as I will later explain.

Besides the complexities of the passage itself, which I have already alluded to, I think that the main reason why the distinctiveness of this contrast in Part II has been overlooked is that such a contrast is not needed for the overall argument of the passage. In fact, to argue that the soul is the actuality of the body, it is sufficient to show that the soul is prior to the body as form is prior to matter; it is not necessary to show that the soul is prior to other actualities. In other words, Part II, except for the last line, where Aristotle says that the soul is that whereby we primarily live and perceive and think,<sup>31</sup> is not needed for the main argument of the passage. The standard interpretation focuses on the contrast between the soul (a form) and the body (matter). Thus, the passage is read as the presentation of a general principle (Part I) that is later applied to the living body (Part III); Part II is thus conflated with Part I or simply overlooked.

An additional factor may be not paying close attention to the contrast between soul and knowledge in Part II. The use of the distributive particles *men* and *de* in the passage leaves no doubt that Aristotle is contrasting the soul and knowledge not only in Part I but also in Part II.<sup>32</sup> This second contrast, and particularly how it is different from the contrast between the soul and knowledge in Part I, is rarely

<sup>31</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a12–13.

<sup>32</sup> See: “*to men epistêmên, to de psuchên*” (414a5–6) and “*toutôn de hé men epistêmê te kai hugieia . . . hé psuchê de . . .*” (414a8–9.12) After the *men* at a8, the first *de* in the sequence of the text is precisely the one introducing the soul at a12. As Ross explains, “δέ [in line 12] is in fact needed, to balance the μέν in line 8; the soul is opposed to knowledge as it is in lines 5–6.” Ross, *Aristotle: De Anima*, 219. Both particles depend on the genitive “of these” (*toutôn*) that opens the sentence, so in this case they must be read together, contrasting one another. The contrastive force of these particles may vary in different contexts. For the purposes of this article it is enough to see that there is at least some contrast between soul, on the one hand, and knowledge and health, on the other.

mentioned by commentators.<sup>33</sup> As we will see in detail later, in Part I the soul and knowledge are contrasted as matter to form, while in Part II they are contrasted as form to another form.

Finally, I think that it is key to notice that there are two general principles at work, and not just one. Aristotle subtly shifts from one principle to the other without alerting the reader and without changing the thrust of the passage as a whole. To appreciate this point, we need to recall his distinction between actualities (for example, the virtue of knowledge) and activities (for example, to actually think) in *De anima* 2.1. In this context, both the activities and the actualities are forms.<sup>34</sup> We thus have three factors, matter and two kinds of form: (i) matter, (ii) actuality (knowledge), and (iii) activity (to think). Bearing these distinctions in mind, let us come back to the passage in 2.2 that we are analyzing to notice how Aristotle is shifting between two different principles (see [a] and [b] below).

Aristotle is distinguishing between actualities, for which he uses nouns (*epistêmê*, *hugieia*), on the one hand, and activities, for which he uses verbal forms (*espistametha*, *epistasthai*, *hugiainomen*, *zômen*, *aisthanometha*, *dianooumetha*), on the other.<sup>35</sup> In Part I, by induction from the examples of knowledge and health, Aristotle argues that (a) every activity (for example, knowing) has two causes, the form (in this case, the actuality of knowledge) and the matter (in this case, the soul

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<sup>33</sup> Philoponus (*On Aristotle On the Soul*), Aquinas (*Commentary on Aristotle's De Anima*), Hicks (*Aristotle's De Anima*), David W. Hamlyn (*Aristotle De Anima: Books II and III [with passages from Book I]*) [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993]), Siwek (*Aristotelis Tractatus De anima*), and Shields (*Aristotle: De anima*) do not comment on the contrast between the soul and knowledge in Part II as being different from the contrast between soul and knowledge in Part I. Ross notes that the soul is described first as matter and then as a form, but he does not comment on how this shift changes the way the soul and knowledge are contrasted in Part II. Ross, *Aristotle: De Anima*, 220.

<sup>34</sup> Actualities are forms, but they can also serve as matter or potentiality of further activities. The standard interpretation seems to read knowledge and health in Part II as playing the role of matter rather than form (the soul then being the formal principle in both cases). For reasons that I will explain in the next section, I do not think that this is the correct reading of this passage.

<sup>35</sup> As regards health, Aristotle uses a noun and a verbal form, thus signaling a distinction between health as an actuality of the body (*hugieia*) and the activity of being-healthy (*hugiainomen*). This distinction is parallel to the distinction between the actuality of knowledge (*epistêmê*) and the activity of knowing (*epistasthai*). I have found no comments on this distinction regarding health among commentators.

as the recipient of that virtue). By contrast, in Part II, Aristotle is using a principle with a different factor; instead of form and matter as the two causes of an activity, we have now two forms as the causes of an activity: (b) that whereby we think is twofold, knowledge (a form) and the soul (a form). There is thus a shift between Parts I and II concerning the two causal factors of an activity: from (a) matter and form to (b) form and form. And then, in Part III, Aristotle shifts back to (a) matter and form as the two factors, saying: "For substance being said in three ways, as we have said, that is form, matter, and the composite."<sup>36</sup> We can see these shifts in the following outline:

[Part I] We know (activity) in virtue of the soul (matter) and knowledge (form); we are healthy (activity) in virtue of a bodily part (matter) and health (form).

[Part II] We know and are healthy (activities) in virtue of the soul *primarily* (form) and knowledge and health (forms).

[Part III] The composite (matter) is ensouled in virtue of the soul (form).

Here is a quote from Hicks, one of the exponents of the standard interpretation, that illustrates how the shift of factors from principle (a) in Part I to principle (b) in Part II easily goes unnoticed. We see no mention of the contrast between two forms; and, at the same time, the overall conclusion that the soul is the form and actuality of the living body still obtains. He says:

Disengaging the argument from its complications, we may briefly state it thus: It is primarily in virtue of its form that a given thing [that is, the matter] is said to have such and such a property. Now it is primarily in virtue of the soul that a thing is said to have life. Therefore, soul is the form of the living being, the *ἐμψυχόν τι*.<sup>37</sup>

In this section we have seen the passage in *De anima* 2.2.414a4–19, its context, complexities, and standard interpretation. I have shown that on this interpretation the distinct contrast between the soul, on the one hand, and knowledge and health, on the other, as two different actualities, one of which is causally prior to the other, goes unnoticed. In the next section I will focus on Part II of the passage, where Aristotle draws this contrast between two forms and actualities.

<sup>36</sup> *De anima* 2.2.414a14–15.

<sup>37</sup> Hicks, *Aristotle's De Anima*, 329.

## III

From the use of the distributive particles, it is clear that Aristotle is contrasting knowledge and health, on the one hand (see *men* at 414a8), with soul, on the other (see *de* at 414a12). Knowledge (*epistêmê*), health (*hugieia*), and soul are all actualities, while being-healthy (*hugiainomen*) and knowing (*epistametha*, *epistasthai*) are activities. The purpose of this section is to consider in detail how Aristotle draws this contrast in 414a8–14.

As I mentioned earlier, the two causal factors of the corresponding activity (knowing, being-healthy, perceiving, and so forth) that Aristotle is considering in this part of the passage are (b) both forms—by contrast to (a) a material factor and a formal one in Part I. That whereby we exercise an activity is twofold: the corresponding actuality and the soul, both of which are forms. Thus, we exercise the activity of knowing both in virtue of knowledge and in virtue of the soul.<sup>38</sup>

At this point I want to address a possible objection against my reading of Part II. Actualities like knowledge and health are forms, but they can also be understood as matter/potentiality of their respective activities. If the latter is the role they have in Part II, then Aristotle is contrasting not (a) one form to another form but, rather, (b) matter to form. Hence, there is no shift after all between the principles used in Parts I and II, and the overall conclusion of the passage—that the soul is the form and actuality of the body—will still be reached. The standard interpretation can thus make good sense of the passage without acknowledging the distinct contrast in Part II that I am arguing for.

While it is true that actualities are not only forms but also potentialities, there are important reasons to think that we should understand knowledge and health in this passage as forms rather than as matter. First, in Part I Aristotle treats both knowledge and health as forms—in contrast to their matter (respectively, the soul as recipient of knowledge and the corresponding bodily part)—so it is strange that he would suddenly change their causal role without any explanation. Second, if Aristotle were considering knowledge and health as matter in

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<sup>38</sup> There are, then, two separate principles, which I have mentioned earlier: (a) We think in virtue of two factors, the recipient (matter) and the virtue of knowledge (a form); and (b) we think in virtue of two factors, primarily in virtue of the soul (a form) and secondarily in virtue of the virtue of knowledge (also a form).

Part II, why does he add the adverb “primarily” there? It appears to be redundant, because by itself form is prior to matter; in the construal of knowledge as matter in Part II, to add “primarily” is simply superfluous. In fact, neither in Part I nor in Part III does Aristotle use the adverb to articulate the priority of one causal factor over the other one, precisely because in those two parts he is concerned with (a) the priority of form over matter. In other words, the use of the adverb “primarily” in Part II makes sense only if Aristotle is contrasting (b) two forms. Finally, that Aristotle refers to knowledge and health as activities of the recipient (414a9–10) signals that in Part II he has in mind another, different factor serving as matter or recipient to knowledge and health (as we see in Part I).

From what I have read, only Owens and Polansky (albeit with different purposes in view) note this duality of formal factors when commenting on this passage. I have already explained why overlooking this point is so easy. Owens is concerned with Aristotle’s attempt in *De anima* 2.2 to elaborate a definition of the soul as the immediate and strict cause of the living body, after the model of *Posterior Analytics* 1.13.<sup>39</sup> Polansky, on the other hand, is concerned with the proper way of relating the powers (knowledge, health, and the like, which he calls “dispositional qualities”) to the soul, so as to avoid the separation of the powers from the soul and the view of the soul as a material substratum of the powers.<sup>40</sup> Here is an illustration from each author:

The subsequent actuality that is the activity of thinking takes place therefore through knowledge and through soul, *both of which are forms*. Correspondingly, we perform the other vital operations through the informing qualities and soul.<sup>41</sup>

Soul is what *first* allows for life, perception, and knowledge: *we* live, *we* perceive, and *we* know on account of the soul. The human being (or animal) is the substratum; the soul is *logos* and form. The dispositional qualities, such as life, perception, knowledge, are somehow *in* the soul, but their actualities or operations are not similarly in the soul. . . . But in fact the *human being* lives, perceives, and *knows in virtue of the soul and its powers*.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> See Owens, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul,” 130–33.

<sup>40</sup> See Polansky, “Aristotle’s *De Anima*,” 184–87.

<sup>41</sup> Owens, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul,” 138. Italics added.

<sup>42</sup> Polansky, “Aristotle’s *De Anima*,” 185. Italics added in the last sentence.

Since both Owens and Polansky consider how the soul (a form) is related to knowledge as form—and not only how the soul is related to the body or to knowledge as matter—they notice the import of Aristotle's contrast between the soul and knowledge in Part II (b) as a contrast between two kinds of form, and not just (a) as a contrast between matter and form (as in Part I). The form that is not the soul they call, respectively, "informing quality" and "dispositional quality."

Now, while Aristotle calls form (*eidos*) not only the soul but also knowledge and health, he nevertheless describes these forms differently. He reserves the adverb "primarily" (*prôtôs*) exclusively for the soul, and he avoids calling the soul "shape" (*morphê*) and "activity" (*energeia*) of the recipient (*dektikou*). Here is a comparison of the terms used by Aristotle for each kind of form:

<u>Knowledge, health</u>	vs.	<u>The soul</u>
[That whereby we F-ing]		That whereby we F-ing <i>prôtôs</i>
<i>morphê kai eidos ti kai logos</i>		<i>logos tis kai eidos</i>
<i>kai hoion energeia tou dektikou</i>		

As I mentioned earlier, the use of the phrase "activity of the recipient [*energeia tou dektikou*]" to describe knowledge and health is puzzling. In the *De anima*, in fact, "activity" is Aristotle's preferred word for the exercise of activities, while "actuality" (*entelecheia*) is his preferred word for virtues like knowledge and health.<sup>43</sup> Why then does he refer to knowledge and health as an activity of the recipient instead of as an actuality of the recipient?

One way to solve this problem would be to say that knowledge (*epistêmê*) in this passage does not mean the habit of knowledge (the actuality) but, rather, its exercise (the activity of knowing). After all, Aristotle himself distinguishes three senses of knowledge in *De anima* 2.5.<sup>44</sup> This interpretation seems *prima facie* supported by his use of the word "activity" to refer to health and knowledge. He would then be contrasting soul and knowledge in terms of actuality versus activity,

<sup>43</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a9.12.

<sup>44</sup> See *De anima* 2.5.417a22.



along the lines of the distinction between two kinds of actuality in *De anima* 2.1. However, this is not a possible reading in this passage.<sup>45</sup>

Aristotle himself qualifies the use of the word “activity” by saying “*as it were*, an activity of the recipient [*hoion energeia*].” As Ross notes, the fact that Aristotle is using so many different notions to describe knowledge and health (namely, shape, form, logos, as it were an activity) is a sign that he is trying to find the right word.<sup>46</sup> Philoponus, commenting on the expression “activity of the recipient,” explains that it refers to the perfections (*teleiotês*) of the body—and the soul is definitely not a perfection of the body.<sup>47</sup> Thus, Aristotle does not have here in mind activities such as thinking, perceiving, and so forth, when he uses the word “activity.” So why does he use the word “activity” (*energeia*) instead of “actuality” (*entelecheia*)? I want to suggest that Aristotle may have used this phrase here to avoid saying that knowledge and health are each an actuality (*entelecheia*) of the recipient in a passage where the main purpose is to argue that the soul is an actuality (*entelecheia*) of the body.

We have seen that Aristotle refers to knowledge and health as forms that are activities of the recipient, while he does not use this phrase to describe the soul as form. On the other hand, he uses the adverb “primarily” at 414a13 only to describe the causality of the soul; knowledge is that in virtue of which we know, but knowledge is not that in virtue of which we primarily know. What then is the import of this adverb? In other words, what kind of priority is signaled by this adverb that befits only the soul?

Since knowledge and health are actualities, “primarily” cannot mean here (a) the temporal priority of an actuality over an activity,

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<sup>45</sup> To begin with, in 2.5 Aristotle distinguishes three senses of knower (*anthrôpos epistêmôn*), and not three senses of knowledge (*epistêmê*). Furthermore, coming back to our passage, Aristotle is using the noun knowledge (*epistêmê*) alongside verbal forms (*epistametha*, *epistasthai*), the former corresponding to actualities, the latter to activities, as noted earlier. The pairing of knowledge and health (*hugieia*), for which Aristotle also uses verbal forms (see *hugiainomen*), also runs against the reading of “knowledge” as an activity. Finally, the reading of knowledge as activity makes no sense here: Aristotle is saying that we exercise the activity of thinking in virtue of knowledge, and not that we exercise the activity of knowledge in virtue of the activity of knowledge.

<sup>46</sup> Ross, *Aristotle: De Anima*, 219.

<sup>47</sup> Philoponus, *On Aristotle On the Soul*, 47.

which is the temporal sense of priority in generation that we find in *De anima* 2.1: Actuality (having, for example, the virtue of knowledge) is prior in this sense to the other actuality (exercising, the activity of theorizing). Otherwise, Aristotle should have qualified knowledge and health too by the adverb “primarily,” because both are instances of actuality; but he did not.

Another possibility would be that “primarily” indicates (b) the causal priority of form over matter (standard interpretation).<sup>48</sup> However, as I have argued earlier, this is not the case here, because knowledge and health are playing the causal role not of matter but of form.

The remaining option then is that primarily in this passage describes (c) the causal priority of one form (the soul) over other forms (knowledge and health). There are thus three different ways of interpreting “primarily” (*prôtôs*) in this passage; I am arguing that (c) is the correct interpretation of “primarily” in *De anima* 2.2.414a13.<sup>49</sup>

To sum up my interpretation of the passage: In *De anima* 2.2.414a4–19 Aristotle has established two related but different points: (1) The soul is a form and actuality rather than matter; and (2) the soul is a form and actuality causally prior to other forms and actualities, such as knowledge and health. We live, perceive, and think (activities) primarily in virtue of the soul and—though not primarily—in virtue of the corresponding actualities as well. The standard interpretation reads the passage as concerned only with (1), which is the overall purpose of the passage.<sup>50</sup> As a result, the distinct contrast between the soul and

<sup>48</sup> See, for example: “Each thing is said to be what it really is . . . in virtue primarily of its form, and only secondarily in virtue of its matter. The force of *πρῶτως* is to bring out the fundamental position of the soul in life. We live and perceive *by the body*, but we cannot be said to do so *πρῶτως*.” Hicks, *Aristotle’s De Anima*, 329 (emphasis added). See also: “Having shown by induction that that according to which primarily each thing is called is form, and that according to which secondarily is matter and subject, he transfers the discussion to what is being enquired into, that is, the animate being; for it is with the soul primarily that we are said to live and perceive and think. Therefore the soul is form *and the body* matter and subject.” Philoponus, *On Aristotle On the Soul*, 47–48 (emphasis added).

<sup>49</sup> Obviously, each sense of priority is not necessarily exclusive of the others. In fact, the soul is prior in all three accounts.

<sup>50</sup> Here are a couple of illustrations: “Taken together, [Aristotle’s] examples suggest that when we say that the soul is that in virtue of which one is alive, we might mean that: (i) the soul is the form whose presence makes

knowledge that Aristotle draws in Part II, namely, a contrast between two forms and actualities, one of which is prior to the other, is overlooked. This contrast easily goes unnoticed due to the complexity of the passage and because it is not necessary for its main argument. In the next section I will consider which kind of causal priority is enjoyed by the soul as actuality of the living body.

#### IV

Aristotle distinguishes different senses of priority (in definition, in substance, in existence) in various places.<sup>51</sup> In this section I will elucidate the causal priority of the actuality of the soul as a priority in substance (*ousia*).<sup>52</sup> I will use Owens's distinction between form at the

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someone alive, or (ii) the soul is a body of an appropriately disposed sort. According to (ii), but not to (i), the soul is itself a composite entity, in whose own account formal and material features must be mentioned. Conversely, according to (i), but not to (ii), the soul is a purely formal entity. It is consequently important to disambiguate what is meant by saying that the soul is that in virtue of which we live." Shields, *Aristotle: De Anima*, 188. As Shields rightly explains, Aristotle resolves the ambiguity in favor of (i). However, the ambiguity to which Shields refers only concerns point (1) and does not address point (2). Here is another example: "Sicut sanitas et scientia sunt ratio ultima seu actus primus, quo reddimur formaliter sani et scientes, ita anima est actus primus, quo constituimur formaliter viventes, sentientes etc." Siwek, *Aristotelis Tractatus De anima*, 283. This statement again leaves point (2) unaddressed. Siwek does not explain how the soul is *actus primus* differently from the way in which *sanitas et scientia* are *acti primi*.

<sup>51</sup> See *Categories* 12–13, *Metaphysics* 5.11, and *Metaphysics* 9.8. For systematic studies on Aristotle's senses of priority see John J. Cleary, *Aristotle on the Many Senses of Priority* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1988), and Michail Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011). See also Christos Y. Panayides, "Aristotle on the Priority of Actuality in Substance," *Ancient Philosophy* 19, no. 2 (Fall 1999): 327–44, and Christopher Shields, "The Priority of Soul in Aristotle's *De anima*: Mistaking Categories?" in *Body and Soul in Ancient Philosophy*, ed. Dorothea Frede and Burkhard Reis (Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 2009), 267–90.

<sup>52</sup> What I call substantial priority/priority in substance is what Peramatzis calls priority in being/ontological priority. Substantial priority needs to be distinguished both from "priority in definition (*logô*)" (see Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle*, 254–65) and from "existential priority" (called ontological priority in Panayides, "Aristotle on the Priority of Actuality in Substance"). As recent commentators have explained, substantial priority need not entail existential priority: That which enjoys substantial priority, in this case the soul, need not exist separately (see Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle*, 205–06).

basic substantial level and form at the qualitative level to explicate the import of the adverb “primarily” at 414a13. While his purpose is different from mine,<sup>53</sup> Owen’s article on Aristotle’s definition of the soul is helpful to articulate the substantial priority of the soul as actuality. I will then turn to Aristotle’s account of the actuality of the soul as the formal cause of the living body in *De anima* 2.4.

According to Owens, in *De anima* 2.1 Aristotle offers a definition of the soul as the form of the body in general terms.<sup>54</sup> This view of the soul as a form of the body in general still falls short of the requirements for an immediate and strict cause that Aristotle sets in *Posterior Analytics* 1.13.<sup>55</sup> *De anima* 2.2 is thus Aristotle’s attempt to disclose the soul as the strict and immediate cause of the living body. With this problem in mind, Owens comments on the passage in 414a4–19.

Owens distinguishes (i) form as the basic formal principle (at the substantial level), namely, the soul; (ii) forms in general (at the qualitative level), for example, knowledge and health; and (iii) activities of life (at the operational level), for example, thinking. He reads the whole passage of 414a4–19 as Aristotle’s attempt to explain the being of the soul (i) in basic formal terms, and not just as (ii) form in general, lest we understand the soul as a form that is fitted to an already constituted body. He argues that although the soul has already been established as form in *De anima* 2.1, the soul has not yet been specified as the basic form. Since we arrive at the soul through the formal notions of life, sensation, and knowledge, and these notions (which he calls informing qualities) belong to (ii) the category of quality and are made known by (iii) their corresponding operations, they have to be read back from the category of quality into (i) the category of substance. Thus, Owens pays attention to the contrast between the soul (a form) and knowledge (a form as well).<sup>56</sup>

For Owens, the force of the adverb “primarily” at 414a13 is precisely to signal the priority of the soul (a form) over other forms such as knowledge and health. The soul is prior because it is the form of the

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<sup>53</sup> Owens is concerned with the insufficiency of Aristotle’s account of the soul to qualify as a strict definition according to the canon of Aristotle’s *Posterior Analytics*. Owens, “Aristotle’s Definition of Soul.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 130–33.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 144–45.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 137–39, and 143–45.

body in a unique and basic way (in the category of substance), and not a form of the body as an informing quality (in the category of quality).<sup>57</sup> This categorial priority, as we may call it, is overlooked by standard readings of the passage that take the adverb “primarily” as signifying simply (a) the general priority of form over matter. There is an actuality in the category of substance (that is, the soul) that is fundamentally prior to all the actualities in the category of quality (knowledge, health, and so forth). Aristotle is then using the adverb “primarily” in our passage to argue not just that the soul is a form but also that the soul is the form of the body in the category of substance, namely, that the soul as actuality is the substantial form of the living body.

Owens concludes his article saying that Aristotle has not succeeded in giving an account of the soul as the strict, basic cause, because by its very nature the soul eludes our grasp.<sup>58</sup> I think it is helpful to distinguish here between two different senses of substantial priority. As Peramatzis explains, we must distinguish between priority in subjecthood and priority in substancehood. The former concerns predication, and it is the notion of priority at stake in the *Categories*. Substance, as the subject in which accidents inhere, is prior to accidents in the order of predication. The latter, by contrast, concerns a deeper sense of being, which is the one at stake in *Metaphysics* 9.<sup>59</sup> If in *De anima* 2.2 Aristotle had in mind priority in subjecthood, I would agree that Aristotle has not succeeded in fully disclosing the substantiality of the soul as cause and actuality of the body. However, I think that in our passage from *De anima* 2.2, Aristotle has in view not that weaker, predicational sense of priority but, rather, the stronger, metaphysical one.

That the substantial priority at stake in our passage is that of substancehood is confirmed by Aristotle’s account of the soul as the formal cause of the body shortly after, in *De anima* 2.4, where he identifies the soul as actuality (*entelecheia*) with the soul as substance (*ousia*) of the body. He explains that the soul is the cause and principle (*aitia kai archē*) of the ensouled body in three of the four ways: The soul is the moving cause, the final cause, and the formal cause.<sup>60</sup> As regards the last one, Aristotle says:

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 143–44.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 144–45.

<sup>59</sup> See Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle’s Metaphysics*, 220–21.

<sup>60</sup> See *Physics* 2.3.

And also the cause as *ousia* of the ensouled bodies. That the soul is cause as *ousia* is evident, for the cause of being [τὸ αἷτιον τοῦ εἶναι] for all is the *ousia*, while living [τὸ ζῆν] is the being [τὸ εἶναι] of living beings, and the cause and principle of this is the soul. Further, the actuality [ἡ ἐντελέχεια] is the logos of that which is in potentiality.<sup>61</sup>

Aristotle explains that the soul is the cause of the body as its actuality (*entelecheia*), logos, and substance (*ousia*). He draws a distinction between the being (*to einaî*) of living beings, on the one hand, and the cause of their being (*to aition tou einaî*, that is, the *ousia*) on the other. It is important to note that, in this division, substance (*ousia*) falls on the side of the cause of being, and not on the side of the being, as we might have expected from his account of substance in the *Metaphysics*.<sup>62</sup> The soul, Aristotle explains, is the formal cause, that which makes a living being be what it is, and not a subject of predication (which is rather the substance as the composite); living is the being of the living being, and it is caused by the soul. The being (*to einaî*) that Aristotle is referring to in this passage must then be carefully distinguished from the essence (*to ti ên einaî*) of the body, which is the substance according to the logos (*ousia kata ton logon*),<sup>63</sup> namely, the soul, as Aristotle explains in *De anima* 2.1.<sup>64</sup> Here is, then, an outline of Aristotle's distinction between the being of the living body and the soul as the cause of this being (including, for the purposes of comparison, references to 2.1):

- The cause of the being (*aition tou einaî*) of the ensouled body, actuality (*entelecheia*), logos, substance (*ousia*) [substance according to the logos (*ousia kata ton logon*) and essence (*to ti ên einaî*)] → The soul.
- The being (*to einaî*) of the living being → Living (*to zên*).

All the forms and actualities of the body, together with their activities, fall on the side of the being (*to einaî*) of the living being. Only the soul is the formal cause, that is, the *ousia*, of the living body. This distinction between the *ousia* (as the cause of being) and the being of the living

<sup>61</sup> *De anima* 2.4.415b11–15.

<sup>62</sup> I will come back to this point in the last section.

<sup>63</sup> Priority in definition is different from priority in substance. The latter implies the former, but not the other way around. Peramatzis, *Priority in Aristotle's Metaphysics*, 265.

<sup>64</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412b10–17.

body squares with the distinction in our passage from *De anima* 2.2 between the soul as that whereby we primarily perceive and think, on the one hand, and the other actualities whereby we exercise the activities of life (though not primarily) on the other. In sum, only the soul is prior in substance, because only the soul is the essence of the living being, that is, its formal substantial cause that makes the living being be what it is.

The other actualities contrasted to the soul in 414a8–13, such as knowledge and health, are not that in virtue of which we primarily think or are healthy because they belong to the category of quality. This also squares with what Aristotle says about these actualities elsewhere: They are perfections (*teleiôseis*)<sup>65</sup> and habits (*hexeis*)<sup>66</sup> of the body and the soul.<sup>67</sup> And habits and perfections belong to the category of quality.<sup>68</sup> *Hexis* is the substantivized form of the Greek verb *echô*, which means to have. Accordingly, these virtues are actualities (*echein kai mê energein*). The soul is also a form and an actuality, a sort of having, but it is not something that the body has as a quality; rather, it is its substantial form. This appears to explain why, in referring to the soul as actuality at the end of *De anima* 2.2, Aristotle says not that it is simply an actuality but, rather, that it is some sort of actuality (*entelecheia tis*).<sup>69</sup>

The priority of an actuality as substance (namely, of the soul) over the other nonsubstantial actualities, which Aristotle precisely articulates in our passage in *De anima* 2.2 and not in *De anima* 2.1, is crucial for a correct understanding of the soul as the actuality of the body. In fact, he says that the soul is something that the body has

<sup>65</sup> See *Physics* 7.3.246a13 and 247a2.

<sup>66</sup> See *Metaphysics* 5.20.1022b10–14, where Aristotle also uses health (*hugēia*) as an example of a virtue (*aretē*), which he describes as a kind of habit (*hexis*).

<sup>67</sup> For the distinction between virtues of the body and virtues of the soul, see *Physics* 7.3.246a10–248a9. For knowledge as a virtue, see, for example, *Nicomachean Ethics* 6.6.

<sup>68</sup> See *Categories* 8.8b26–27. Interestingly, Aristotle also refers to the external figure (*schēma*) and the shape (*morphē*) as another species of quality (see 10a11–12). If we consider the harmony of the living body as a sort of figure or shape of the body, then harmony too may be regarded as a quality and perfection of the body.

<sup>69</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.414a27–28.

(*echein*)<sup>70</sup> and calls the soul actuality of the body—the word “actuality” (*entelecheia*) is also built on the verbal root *echein*. But, understandably, Aristotle does not say that the soul is a virtue or habit of the body; otherwise, the soul would be an accident of the body.<sup>71</sup>

We are now in a better position to see more clearly the insufficiency of the notion of actuality, just by itself, to establish the substantial priority of the soul. In order to avoid reducing the soul to a quality (and hence to an accident) of the body, it is not enough to say that it is a (first) actuality, as Aristotle does in *De anima* 2.1, because “first” here conveys only a temporal priority (in generation) relative to the corresponding activities, and not a substantial priority. This explains why some medieval philosophers wanted to draw a clear distinction between *forma* and *perfectio* in discussions about the soul.<sup>72</sup> The soul is the (substantial) form of the body, but not its perfection, lest the soul be understood as an accident of the body.

Why then is it easy to assume, more or less explicitly, that the account of the soul as actuality of the body sufficiently establishes the substantial priority of the soul? I think there are two main reasons. First, we implicitly read the notion of essence (*to ti ên einaî*) into the account of the soul as actuality of the body in *De anima* 2.1. In fact, right after giving the last version of the account of the soul as actuality of the body, Aristotle moves on to say that the soul is the essence of the living body.<sup>73</sup> And the notion of essence unambiguously conveys the substantiality of the soul. However, we must note that this is a separate claim: There are actualities in the category of quality as well.<sup>74</sup> The notion of actuality, by contrast, does not by itself convey the substantiality of the soul.

Second, we have become accustomed to the phrase “the soul is the first actuality,” which is probably not a good translation, because it

<sup>70</sup> See, for example, *De anima* 2.1.412b25–26.

<sup>71</sup> See *De anima* 2.4.408a1–5.

<sup>72</sup> See Sander W. De Boer, *The Science of the Soul: The Commentary Tradition on Aristotle's De anima, c. 1260–c. 1360* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2013), 20–36, 123–208, and 227–52.

<sup>73</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412b10.

<sup>74</sup> Something analogous may occur with Aristotle's distinction between form, matter, and composite as three kinds of substance (*ousia*) at the beginning of the chapter (see 412a3), which comes immediately before his account of the soul as actuality: that something (for example, the soul) is substance as form (versus as matter and composite) does not necessarily mean that it is the essence or substantial form of the composite.



accidentally conveys the idea that there is only one (first) actuality in the body. Now, while the essence/substantial form of a living being is only one, its actualities are many. The best translation of the phrase is rather "the soul is actuality, the first (kind) [ἡ ψυχὴ ἐστὶν ἐντελέχεια ἡ πρώτη]," because *entelecheia* is a predicate without the definite article *hē*.<sup>75</sup> Aristotle at this point wants only to give a general definition of the soul as form and actuality; he has not yet contrasted the soul as actuality to other actualities of the body in terms of substantial priority.

Before concluding, I want to discuss briefly, as a sort of corollary, two problems directly related to the priority of the soul as actuality. The first is the role of the soul as the principle and actuality that unifies the different powers of the soul. The second concerns an apparent tension between Aristotle's accounts of substance as actuality (*entelecheia*) in the *De anima* and as activity (*energeia*) in the *Metaphysics*, to which I have already alluded in the introduction.

## V

As Shields has convincingly argued, for Aristotle the soul is not simply a set of powers, but prior to them as substance. He explains that Aristotle is committed to the substantiality of the soul: The body has its identity conditions parasitic upon the soul whose body it is, and not the other way around. To say that the soul is just a set of powers is to make a category mistake in which we take a collection of capacities for a substance.<sup>76</sup> Now, the powers of the soul (for example, the nutritive power, the sensitive power) are also actualities, rather than activities. Thus, in order to avoid a category mistake in calling the soul an actuality, we need to find a way to articulate the substantial priority of the soul as actuality over its powers.

Aristotle uses the notion of principle (*archē*) to explicate this priority: While the soul is defined by such powers, the soul is nevertheless the principle and cause of those powers.<sup>77</sup> Thus, Aristotle

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<sup>75</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412a27–28; see also 412b5–6.

<sup>76</sup> See Shields, "The Priority of the Soul," 285–90.

<sup>77</sup> See *De anima* 2.2.413a20–b13. I am signaling here the distinction between priority in definition and priority in substance. Just like priority in generation need not entail priority in substance, priority in definition need not entail priority in substance either.

is carefully avoiding the identification of the soul with its powers. These powers are actualities that, in turn, are prior to their activities. Thus, the powers are both powers of the soul (see the phrase *dunamis allê psuchês* at 413a33) and principles of the activities of life, while the soul is the principle of those powers. Accordingly, we must note two different uses of the word “principle” (*archê*): the principle of the activities (that is, the powers) and the principle of the principle of the activities (namely, the soul). This squares with Aristotle’s view of the soul as that actuality in virtue of which we primarily exercise the activities of life, because powers too are actualities in virtue of which we exercise those powers of life, though not primarily.

The notion of principle (*archê*) thus conveys the necessary priority of the soul over its powers. The notion of actuality (*entelecheia*), on the other hand, is also needed to account for the unity of all those powers.<sup>78</sup> As Shield also explains, following Aristotle,<sup>79</sup> actuality is precisely the controlling (*kuriôs*) sense of unity.<sup>80</sup> In the same way in which the soul’s being an actuality is the best answer to the question about the unity of the living body,<sup>81</sup> we may say that the soul’s being an actuality is also the best answer to the question about the unity of the powers of the soul. These powers are one because their principle, which is the soul, is an actuality.

Now, in order to explain how the soul is the cause of its powers (and not a mere set of powers) and how these powers are one, it is not enough to say that the soul is an actuality. We need to qualify that the soul is an actuality in a primary and unique way. This is precisely what the contrast between two kinds of actualities in *De anima* 2.2 gives us: The soul, and only the soul, is that actuality in virtue of which we primarily exercise the activities of life. This priority squares with Aristotle’s view of the soul as the principle (*archê*) of its powers and as the cause of the being of the living being (*aition tou einaï*).

Let us now turn briefly to the tension between Aristotle’s account of substance as actuality in the *De anima* and his account of substance

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<sup>78</sup> I think this is how we should interpret Aristotle’s claim that the soul holds the body together (*sun-echein*). And that which holds the body and its powers together can only be one, not many, lest an infinite regress obtain. See *De anima* 2.5.411b5.

<sup>79</sup> See *De anima* 2.1.412b9.

<sup>80</sup> See Shields, “The Priority of the Soul,” 275.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 276.

as activity in the *Metaphysics*. We have a Solomon dilemma in which both treatises claim ownership, so to speak, of substance. What is prior in substance, according to the *De anima*, is the soul as actuality (*entelecheia*) and not its activity; and this actuality is the principle (*archê*). By contrast, what is prior in substance according to *Metaphysics* 9.8 is rather the activity (*energeia*); and this activity, which is the end (*telos*), is the principle (*archê*). We thus have two principles, actuality and activity, each of which claims priority in substance. This is certainly a complex issue that needs to be studied in detail, so here I will just offer a few comments as the beginning of an answer to this important question. I do so because, understandably, from the point of view of readers of Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, it appears to be striking to say that the soul as actuality, and not as activity, enjoys substantial priority.

One key to solving this tension is to understand the different nature of the treatises. The *De anima* is part of natural philosophy. Composite, material substances introduce a tension between substance as formal cause and substance as final cause that is not present in immaterial beings. As Aristotle puts it in the *Physics*, nature as form is like a doctor doctoring itself.<sup>82</sup> This tension is reflected in the shared priority in substance between essence as actuality (the soul) and essence as activity (soul-at-work). Natural teleology displays this tension.

Another way to approach the problem would be to consider what would be lost if the essence of the living body were only its activity (*energeia*). If that were the case, substance would arrive too late, so to speak, and it would be difficult to explain how such an account of the substance of a living body would differ from the account of the soul as the harmony of the body. Moreover, there would be no explanation of the internal teleology displayed in the generation of a living being toward its completion. The living body must already have (note again how the word *entelecheia* is built on the root of the verb *echein*, which means "to have"), at least in some sense, its substance. On the other hand, to say that the substance of the living body is only its actuality (*entelecheia*) would eliminate the further teleological thrust of the being of living beings, as not all the being of substance comes at the beginning. Even if the living being has its substance in some real sense, there is more to come; the living being does not yet have its being in a full and

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<sup>82</sup> See *Physics* 2.8.199b31.

complete way (hence the connection that Aristotle draws between *energeia* and *telos* in the *Metaphysics*). In this case, (the complete) substance would be arriving too early. In other words, actuality and activity balance one another in the case of living beings: Both share in substantial priority, though in different ways. Their substance is both actuality and activity, as formal cause and final cause are different but inseparable.

The recent deepening of the understanding of Aristotle's account of substance as activity, which has been necessary because of some abuses of the notion of actuality (as if activity were not essential to an animal's being as well), should not bring us to the same error from the other extreme, monopolizing substance under activity, so to speak. Rather, we must acknowledge that, in the case of living beings, substance is the legitimate child of both actuality and activity.

In sum, in these two corollaries we see again the need and importance of articulating the priority of the soul as actuality of the body. The notion of actuality is indispensable to explain the unity of the powers of the soul and to prevent the reduction of substance to a supervenient activity or quality of the body. However, at the same time, the notion of actuality, just by itself, conveys only priority in generation (see *De anima* 2.1) and fails to establish the required substantial priority of the soul. We need the notion of actuality, but it is not sufficient. The account of the soul as actuality of the body in *De anima* 2.1 falls short of disclosing the appropriate, substantial priority of the soul as actuality of the living body. If we want the soul to do its causal job without committing a category mistake, we need to articulate its priority as actuality.

The solution to this problem, as I have argued here, is found in the passage from *De anima* 2.2.414a8–14, where Aristotle draws a contrast between the soul as actuality and other actualities of the body in such a way that the substantial priority of the soul as actuality is disclosed: Only the soul is the actuality in virtue of which we primarily live, perceive, and think. For the reasons I have explained, the distinctiveness of this contrast as between two actualities of the first kind has been overlooked in the standard interpretation of the passage.